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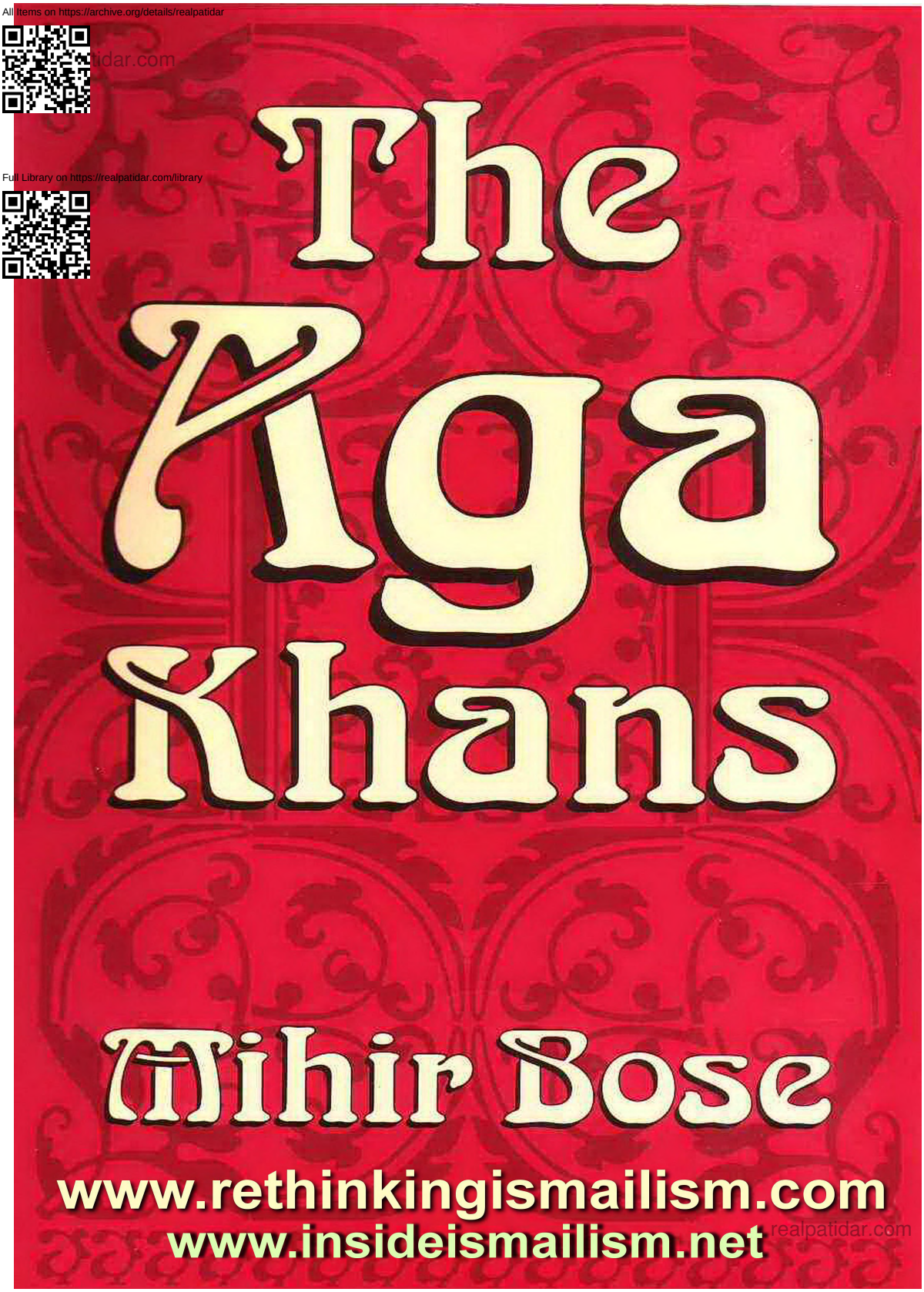

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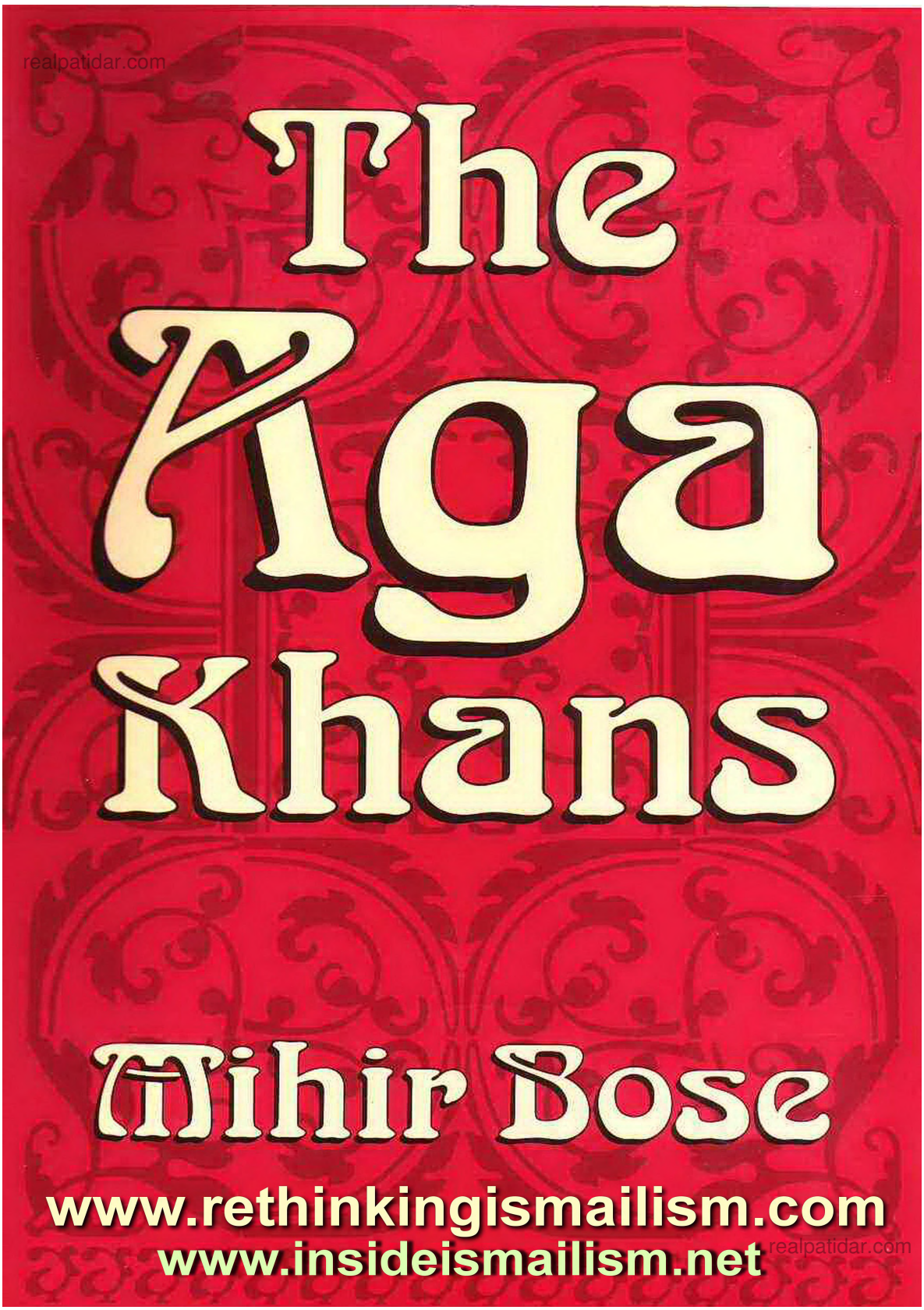

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Also by the author

Lost Hero
A Biography of Subhas Chandras Bose

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Published by World's Work Ltd
The Windmill Press, Kingswood, Tadworth, Surrey
Copyright © 1984 Mihir Bose
Index compiled by F. H. C. Tatham BA
Printed in Great Britain by
Richard Clay (The Chaucer Press) Ltd
Bungay, Suffolk
ISBN 0 437 02555 6

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Writing a book of this nature has inevitably meant a great deal of research and I am grateful to Dennis Judd for introducing me to Frank Dadswell, who not only proved an imaginative researcher but one against whom I could bounce my ideas. Abbey Shasore proved a very competent research assistant.

My understanding of the Khan family's activities on the Continent — France, Switzerland, and Germany — was made possible by as delightful a collection of women as any writer could wish for. Lolo Frankel not only used her knowledge of pre-war German script to translate some rare, extremely valuable, documents but brought to it an impish sense of fun and an acute insight. Hana Ludikar translated just as beautifully, even if her Czech friends found her interest in Hitler's Germany strange, and one of them, quite comically, got the impression that Aga III was responsible for the founding of the Czech airforce. Her daughter, Helena Ludikar, was characteristically less patient with the many demands I made on her and always eager to get to the bottom of every story. But this did nothing to detract from her excellent French translations. Susie Gibson of Riviera Books in Nice brought all those qualities of single-mindedness and determination which made the expatriate Briton such a marvel in the days of the Raj, even if her valiant efforts only proved that when it comes to secrecy, the French have nothing to learn from the English.

Archivists and librarians of various institutions helped me during the research. I would particularly like to thank Martin Moir and his staff at the India Office Library in London; W.S. Hutton of Pembroke College, Cambridge; Miss Baird of the Scottish Record Office; Dorothy Hamerton of the Royal Institute of International Affairs; Kenneth A. Lohf of Columbia University; Jody McCoy of the University of Oregon; Marilla B. Guptil of the United Nations; Cathy Henderson of the Humanities Research Centre at the University of Texas who obligingly put me in touch with Rachel Cummins — an admirable researcher; Dr Maria Keipert of the Bundesarchiv in Bonn; Mrs Olive Geddes of the National Library of Scotland; John Hemmings and Mrs Kelly of the Royal Geographic Society; Catherine Compton of the Halton Library at Harvard University; Mary Flagg at the University of New Brunswick; David E. Schoonover of Yale University; Mary L. Robertson of Henry E. Huntingdon Library; John D. Stinson of the New York Public Library; Frank Walker of New York University; Timothy D. Murray of Princeton University in St Louis; R. Russell Maylone of Northwestern University Library; Virginia Lowell Mauck of Indiana University; Ethel C. Simpson of the University of Arkansas; Kathleen Jacklyn and Herbert Finch of Cornell University; Kathleen Bailey of the *Washington Times*; Sven Welander of the League of Nations Archives in Geneva; Ronald E. Swerczek of the National Archives and Records Service in Washington; Michelle Smith of Microform Ltd; K. Nicholls of the University of Birmingham;

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Judith A. Schiff of Yale University; Nancy Bressler of Princeton University; E. Johnson of the House of Lords Record Office; Mr Gondil and his staff at the Maharastra State Archives in Bombay; Patricia Mathven of the Liddell Hart Centre of Military Archives at Kings College, London; Dennis Symington of the Foreign and Commonwealth Record Office; O. Gauye, Director of the Swiss Archives in Berne; and the staff of the University of London Library, the British Museum Newspaper Library at Colindale, the Public Record Office at Kew, the British Institute of Recorded Sound and the BBC Sound Archives. Crown Copyright material used in this book appears by kind permission of the Controller of *HMSO*.

A great many friends, acquaintances and strangers helped me with this book. I would like to thank: the Hon. David Astor; Viscountess Astor; Mrs Bronwen Astor; the Hon. Julian Amery; the Countess of Avon; Rosemary Bigwood; Lord Boothby; Sarah Baring; Alexander Chancellor; Lady Diana Cooper; Lord Derby; Pierre Doublet; M. R. D. Foot; Lady Gladwyn; Sir Hugh Greene; Martin Gilbert; Richard Griffiths; Sir Rupert Hart-Davis; the late H. Montgomery Hyde; Lady Kelly; John Kobal; the Marquis of Lothian; Prince Rainier; Joel Rodrigues; Cal McCrystal; Mrs W. M. Macmillan; Brian Masters; Margaret, the Duchess of Argyll; Madeline Masson; Nicholas Mosley; Arianna Stassinopoulos; Anthony Terry; and Philip Ziegler.

The present Aga Khan, Prince Karim, has not stopped me from writing the book but he has not exactly approved of it either. He has not found time to meet me although I have had several discussions with Gerry Wilkinson of the Secretariat de Son Altesse l'Aga Khan at his headquarters at Aiglemont in Gouvieux, France, and Amir Bhatia in London. These discussions have been uniformly polite and courteous although I went away with the impression that the present Aga Khan would have preferred that I had concentrated on his life and times, rather than those of his father, grandfather, great-grandfather, and great great-grandfather. But this reluctance to delve into the past has prevented me from researching into one potentially fruitful source: the Royal Archives at Windsor. Despite the best efforts of Sir Robin Mackworth-Young, Keeper of the Archives, the Aga did not give me permission to look at any records relating to his family there.

I am grateful to Derek Priestley for his scrupulous editing and the patient manner in which he has borne the book and my curious methods of doling it out to him.

Several typists helped in preparing the manuscript. Julie Khan (no relation) brought a sense of adventure to it, and Sue Cairncross was, as usual, quite exemplary. Sue, of course, was more than a typist, at times acting as both researcher and editor, and she fought her way through a myriad of impossible names and indecipherable handwriting.

I cannot begin to thank Margaret Browne for all her help, not only in preparing the typescript, but sustaining my spirits admirably over a long, often difficult, period. And, as ever, Janet and Yehuda Mokades and their home provided a wonderful haven.

Finally, this book owes a great deal to John Lovesey. Although I grew up in Bombay and have many good friends from the Aga Khan's community, the idea of writing a book about the Khans had never occurred to me until John stoked the fires of imagination in one of those all too characteristic pub conversations, where you begin with one subject and end up discussing something very different. During its long pregnancy, John has been extremely solicitous and understanding, while his wife Christine's cuisine and warmth have considerably eased the labour pains.

Mihir Bose
London, April 1984

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Introduction

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In 1967 a young man, just turning thirty, visited a small Asian community in Iringa in Tanzania. The young man had a most curious background: his mother was English, his father half Italian and he himself was one of the richest men in the world. He had arrived in Iringa, and its small community of 800-odd Asians, as part of his religious duties. Iringa is one of those Tanzanian places which nobody has ever heard of, and no celebrity ever visits. But this young man's visit was so important that a special extension was built onto the house in which he was to live. This was fitted out in what the locals called 'the Western style', meaning a bathroom with a proper toilet and a bath tub. Some time during his stay in Iringa the young man had a bath in the bath tub. This would hardly be worth mentioning except that long after the young man had left Iringa, the water that he had used for his bath was saved, and bottled. The Asian community in Iringa believed the young man was God and they were happy to buy bottles of the young man's bath water and preserve it in their homes as a sure mark of their God.

That young man is now rather older. On 13th December 1983 he celebrated his forty-seventh birthday. Though still good looking, he is now a man with years of hard work behind him, who dresses unostentatiously — only a single ring, a gold watch and cuff links — and meticulously tailored suits that disguise his stoutness although not his baldness, or his enjoyment of juvenile pranks.

He is, to give him his full title, Prince Karim El Husseni, Aga Khan IV, the 49th hereditary Imam of the Ismaili Muslims of the world, and claiming direct descent from the prophet Mohammed. His Ismaili followers are mainly Asians, spread through the Indian subcontinent, parts of East Africa, and now in Canada and in Britain. It is difficult to estimate how many Ismaili Muslims there are and though there have been reports that there are as many as twenty-two million, it is possible that the worldwide following of the Aga numbers no more than about four or five million. The Aga's own highly geared publicity never actually estimates how many Ismaili Muslims there are throughout the world, but suggests that there are probably over ten thousand in Britain. These are mostly refugees from Amin's Uganda, including some spectacularly successful businessmen who form part of the rich Asian community developing in this country. While to

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the West he is exotic, very nearly English, to his followers he is a God whose utterances are law, and about whom they are loath to discuss anything.

In recent years his image in the West has had an interesting duality: in the sporting pages he has won increasing fame and reputation as 'Prince of the Turf', owning prize-winning horses of great value and considerable sporting distinction. Racing, in recent times, has impressed the Aga's name on the sporting public particularly through his ownership of Shergar which won the 1981 Derby by ten lengths and established itself as one of the greatest horses of all times; its subsequent kidnapping and possible death have once again brought the Aga's name into the public domain. The Aga, himself, has sought to promote an image of the moderate Muslim leader who can deal with the West and who leads a forward-looking community in Asia, Africa and the Middle East, keen to harness the technology of the West and promote economic well-being and prosperity. In the age of the Ayatollahs and strident Islamic fundamentalism, this has been a useful image to project and the Aga has done much to do so by offering prizes for Muslim architecture. Also, in his public utterances he has done much to portray himself as a serious leader, constantly exhorting his community to educate and improve itself and devoting his energies to act as a sort of superior social worker building hospitals, schools and nurseries.

There is a third dimension to Aga Khan IV. That is mainly in the gossip columns of the tabloid newspapers and satirical magazines like *Private Eye*. The journalists here are less interested in accepting the Aga as a super Third World social worker, concentrating rather on his wealth and his off-duty socializing. To a certain extent, this is the sort of attention that almost any man of wealth is exposed to. The Aga is extremely wealthy, reputedly the possessor of a £500,000,000 fortune, has his own jet — a Grumman Gulf Stream plane — and innumerable Mercedes. He also owns palatial homes in Paris, Geneva, Porto Cervo, Cap d'Antibes and has his headquarters at Aiglemont, near Paris. Invariably this draws him into the sort of world chronicled weekly by the *Spectator* columnist, the Greek-born Taki. Taki, who with Nigel Dempster, the *Daily Mail*'s diarist, is one of the *bêtes noires* of the Aga Khan, has often written bitchy little paragraphs in the gossip press that drive the Aga to near apoplexy, none more so than the continuing speculation about the Aga's private life. He has been married to an English socialite and model, Sally Croker-Poole, since 1969 and has had three children by her; Prince Rahim, Princess Zahra and Prince Hussein. According to Taki, his name has been linked with a number of beautiful women. Not surprisingly, the Aga is touchy about the press and uses an efficient PR machine to promote his image and guard against too many inquisitive enquiries.

Of course the lifestyle of the very rich, like Howard Hughes or Paul Getty, has always been complicated. What makes the Aga special is that he is not just a rich man. He is God to his followers who contribute generously to his upkeep and well-being. He is also a man who is increasingly seeking to play a political role in the turbulent affairs of Islam and the Third World. The engine of the Aga Khan is undoubtedly in the Ismaili community. The

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Ismailis consider themselves superior to other Muslims, more sophisticated and very different from the rest of the Islamic fraternity. Though like all other Muslims they have prayer meetings every Friday, they do not do so in a Mosque. They meet in what is called a Jamat Khana; in London it is at 5 Palace Gate, London, W8, the Aly Khan's former residence, though occasionally on Fridays the Ismailis hire Westminster Central Hall or Hammersmith or Kensington Town Halls. Recently they have begun to meet at the Ismailia Centre in Cromwell Road.

All religions are a shrewd mixture of God and Mammon, be they Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, or even the Jewish religion. But in the case of the Ismailis the marriage between God and Mammon has been so arranged, as Ismailis themselves admit, that money is often the focal point of the religion. In the various Jamat Khanas of the world the religion is administered by a Mukhi, who is the chief priest, and a Kamadia, who is the junior priest. The men and women traditionally sit in separate rows in the Jamat Khana with the men headed by the Mukhi and the Kamadia, and the women by the wives of the Mukhi and the Kamadia. When the Ismailis meet on Friday at the Jamat Khana they normally find they have received a 'Firman' from the Aga Khan. This is an individually telexed letter to every Jamat Khana in the world which starts by saying: 'My most affectionate and spiritual children' and generally contains some fairly sensible stuff about educating the children, seeing that they are well fed and clothed and that they go to bed early after study and prayers.

The Ismailis call their prayers '*Duas*', and have eight such *Duas*, the eighth being the *Duas* to the Aga Khan. Though the Aga Khan claims to be a descendant of the prophet, the Ismailis actually pray to the Aga Khan as God, in other words he is accorded a status higher than the prophet Mohammed, something other Muslims might consider blasphemous. But what distinguishes the Ismailis is that the whole religion revolves around the offering of money to their priests and through them to the Aga Khan. Every time an Ismaili deals with the Mukhi he has to pay some money. The Ismailis are also required to pay one eighth of their income as *Dasong* (tithe) to the Aga Khan. The Aga has often told Ismailis that '*Dasong* is the foundation of religion'. And while every Ismaili gives this *Dasong* freely, there was some muttering within the community, when in 1975 certain Ismailis living in Portugal and existing on social security were told by Ismaili missionaries who had travelled to that country that despite this, they had to pay one eighth of their social security as a contribution to the Aga. There is no way of estimating how much this *Dasong* amounts to, though according to one estimate it could be as much as £75,000,000 annually.

The *Dasong* is not the only thing that Ismailis contribute to the Aga. Every Friday there is also an auction for donating money to him. Then there is what is called *Khada-Khuraki*, which means donating food and drink to the Aga. Generally, Ismaili families, whenever they have a big meal, even a family meal, set aside a part of it for the Aga. This food is then brought to the Jamat Khana and auctioned with the proceeds going to the Aga Khan.

There are also societies to which Ismailis belong and membership of these

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societies requires payments of money. Such societies are the *Life and Dedication Brotherhood*, for which an Ismaili may have to pay as much as £250, or the *Kurbani* (Sacrifice) Society where a person may have to pay £1,000. There does not seem to be any system whereby the Aga Khan can monitor whether he is receiving all the money due to him, although the Ismailis pay up with such cheerfulness and dedication that it is unlikely that the Mukhis or the Kamadias would defraud the Aga. In the past, however, this has caused problems to previous Agas.

In return for such contributions, the Aga acts as spiritual adviser and economic counsellor. Ismailis, even dissident, lapsed ones, are unanimous in praising Aga Khan IV as a forward-looking leader who has helped people who want to better themselves, particularly encouraging them to come to the West and be educated in modern technologies and ideas. The followers of the present Aga Khan maintain that the money that is collected is ploughed back into the community and that, through institutions like the Industrial Promotional Services, the Aga has done much to modernize his community and help his followers develop industries. There can be little doubt that compared to many other Muslim communities, the Ismaili community is forward-looking and progressive in the Western sense of the word — and proud to have a leader who is so well known in the West.

Yet how is it that the Ismailis, mainly an Asian community, have as their leader a man who, for all practical purposes, is a white man living in the West? When the Aga's son, Prince Rahim, becomes Aga he will be almost wholly English. How does this come about? Why, at a time of such great political and racial change, does a community of browns and blacks accept as God a man who is white? Some of the answers to this lie in the impact of Western colonialism on Asia and Africa, but a lot of it can be traced to events, starting in the 1840s, which have transformed the Aga Khan family. This book is not a story of the present Aga Khan, except very briefly, but a story of his father (who was not Aga Khan), his grandfather, his great great grandfather, whose actions and decisions placed Karim where he is today. Though Aga Khan IV claims descent from the prophet Mohammed and can trace his family tree thirteen hundred years back, the story of the Aga Khans is less than one hundred and fifty years old. It is intimately tied up with the British and their Empire. It began quite dramatically one hot August day at Girishk, a British military outpost in Kandahar in Afghanistan. Then Aga Khan I, the great great grandfather of the present Aga Khan, took what seemed a small step. It was to transform his family's position in the world.

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BOOK ONE

THE PERSIAN REFUGEE

Aga Khan I, Aga Khan II
(1841 – 1885)

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Chapter 1

The Horseman with an Idea

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Some time in the first week of August 1841, probably the 5th (we can't be absolutely sure), a Persian nobleman accompanied by about a hundred horsemen arrived at Girishk, then one of the forward British positions in the western Afghan province of Kandahar. Later British observers would subsequently describe the nobleman as 'a coarse-made, hard featured man', who dressed plainly in contrast to the ostentatious clothes preferred by most Afghans and Persians, the only exception being his high Persian cap. He had a fine black beard and very prominently arched eyebrows which he used effectively during his colourful conversations. (See illustration, page 97.)

But that hot summer day — so hot that most of the British in Afghanistan that year found it almost impossible to go out of their houses between the hours of seven in the morning and six in the evening — the nobleman looked a lot more dishevelled. For the last month he had been wandering through the arid wastes of central Persia and the mountains of Baluchistan to reach this haven of British security.

His arrival caused little stir. Horsemen suddenly arriving at Girishk that summer, or for that matter almost any British outpost, were not news to the British. Two years earlier the British had come to Afghanistan, installing a puppet King, Shuja. But though the King had proved pliant enough, not all his subjects were so accommodating and by now the British were in the throes of the classical imperial dilemma so familiar in our age: some among the British, despising the King and the Chiefs that surrounded him, wanted to change everything in Afghanistan, while others hoped that a few alterations would steady things and preserve British presence.

Even without foreigners Afghanistan had been a turbulent country of many chiefs and too few Afghans willing to take orders. Now, as the British tried to bolster their puppet King, uncoordinated, sporadic rebellions broke out everywhere. It was a confusing, messy situation, a world where rumour and intrigue abounded. Horsemen suddenly appeared with news of plots and battles, just as suddenly disappeared. Girishk was ideally situated to receive such horsemen. On the outermost western tip of the most western Afghan province, it looked out like a beacon on a sea of possible enemies. Next door there was Baluchistan, then as now, a land of warring tribes and chiefs with swiftly changing allegiances. The horsemen who came to Girishk

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often vanished into Baluchistan, a land no ruler had ever really controlled, and none ever would.

But the most significant of these curious adjacent countries was Herat. It is now a province of Afghanistan, then it was one of those small states that lived in the shadow of a great country and shaped its policies to suit its geographical situation. The great country was Persia with a new ruler and new ambitions. Some years earlier the old Shah, a respected and strong ruler, had died, leaving no natural successor. He had been succeeded by his young grandson after the usual sort of power struggles then endemic in Persia, and he had begun to look to Herat to satisfy his territorial ambitions. (See illustration, page 98.) Herat was supposed to accept the Shahs of Persia as their rulers, their coins were required to bear his name and face. But Herat baulked at accepting such certain signs of Persian overlordship and the new Shah had sent an army to try and capture Herat. The rulers of Herat had turned to the British for help and though the Shah had not been successful, Herat continued to bubble over, inspiring some among the British with further plans for the spread of British influence.

It was from this Sargasso sea of plots, counter-plots and war that, on that August day, the nobleman and his group of horsemen emerged. But they were no mere horsemen willing to trade information for quick reward, and then disappear into oblivion. The story the nobleman had to tell the British was quite extraordinary. He was, he told them, Aga Khan Mehalatee, the spiritual chief of the Ismailis, a Muslim religious sect. He had spent the last four years fighting the Shah in the southern province of Kerman and knew something of the problems the British had had with the new Persian ruler and his designs on Herat. The Shah, the Aga continued, was the common enemy of both the British and the Ismailis, and it seemed only natural to join forces against him. Stories of the Ismaili chief had preceded him and the British already knew something about him. Even then they were surprised to find him in their midst.

News of his arrival was quickly relayed to the British political agent in Kandahar, Major Henry Rawlinson, who on the 6th August 1841 wrote to his superior, William Macnaghten, British Minister and Envoy at Kabul:

> The power of this chief has been lately so much on the increase that the Court of Persia has been obliged to adopt against him the most vigorous measures. Dr. Forbes reported from Meshed that a Persian regular force 6,000 strong was about to march from Tehran in April last to suppress the Kerman rebellion and I conclude that it is the advance of these troops that has compelled the Aga Khan to fly to Kandahar.

Here luck played a prominent part. For Rawlinson was one of those remarkable men who both fashioned and symbolized the Imperial expansion of the early part of the nineteenth century. He had journeyed out to India as a young man of sixteen, travelling on the very same ship that was taking Sir John Malcolm back to India. Malcolm by then was already a legend — one of those nineteenth-century heroes who would be both an

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example and a reproach to those who followed. Malcolm had travelled to Persia in 1800 as a sort of British plenipotentiary and done much to initiate British policy and mould British thinking towards that country. On Rawlinson's maiden voyage to India, Malcolm quickly took him under his wing and by 1833, at the age of twenty-three, Rawlinson himself was on his way to Persia — as part of a detachment of British officers and sergeants to discipline the somewhat unruly Persian army of the then Shah, Fath Ali. Steeped in classical education, as were most of the British officers of that period, Rawlinson used his time to travel extensively in Persia; his descriptions of such travel were read out at a meeting of the Royal Geographical Society and caused a sensation. He could speak Persian and firmly believed, like Malcolm, in a British mission in Persia and had already discovered a Cuneiform script that he was bent on deciphering. A great traveller, it was his chance meeting with a Russian that was to reveal Russian/Afghan contacts, and convince the British that the Russians were seeking to expand in Central Asia.

Rawlinson was appointed Political Agent in Kandahar in June, 1840 — and it was for him a crucial appointment. (See illustration, page 99.) The preceding year had been a fairly dull one in Bombay serving in the army and Rawlinson was impatient to play the part of a full-blown political agent. He was thirty-one, he had already shown a knack for turning every opportunity, however unlikely, to his professional advantage and he had already begun to develop a philosophy that would be the creed of political agents for a generation. In his memoirs, written when he had become a legend, Rawlinson would spell it out very clearly: 'Create business for yourself. Lose no opportunity of making yourself useful ... grasp at everything and never yield an inch ... above all, never stand on trifles.' To Rawlinson the Aga was too good a trifle to miss.

Macnaghten was the exact opposite of Rawlinson in temperament and upbringing. In the long historical view he was to exercise as great an influence on British policy in Central Asia as did Sir John Malcolm. But while Malcolm had been a soldier, Macnaghten was a civil servant. Most of his contemporaries thought he had made an ideal civil servant, though some thought his rapport with men was so poor that he should never have been allowed to proceed beyond the position of appeals judge, safely considering written evidence. Alexander Burnes, the Scot from Montrose who was his deputy in Kabul, felt that while he had good judgement he had 'no experience and quite unskilled with the natives. He is also very hasty in taking up and throwing off plans and altogether the torch of ambition has been lighted too late in him.' (Burnes, whose death in Kabul was to mark the start of the uprising that would drive the British out of Afghanistan in 1842, was himself described by a contemporary as being overrated at the beginning of his life and underrated at the end).

Macnaghten could not quite decide what the British should do with the Aga Khan. In his official letter to Rawlinson, written on the 11th August 1841, he agreed that it would be impossible to refuse asylum 'without a manifest breach of those laws of hospitality which specially among the

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Eastern nations are held in general reverence.' Yes, he should be received by Timour (Shuja's son who ruled in Kandahar) 'as a guest who had sought the protection of the Afghan monarchy.' The Persians could hardly complain since they had sheltered rebel chiefs from Kandahar in their country. But Timour should be told that he must not encourage the Khan to expect help for any of his plans, and the 'Chief should be distinctly apprised by His Royal Highness that as a condition necessary to his obtaining the protection he has sought he must relinquish such designs while enjoying an asylum within His Majesty's [King Shuja's] territories.' He also sought to restrain some of Rawlinson's plans: 'In your own communication with Agha Khan, which should be conducted with as little ostentation as possible, you should invariably hold the same language [i.e. do not exceed your brief from me].'

In a private letter, written the same day as the official letter, Macnaghten took a slightly different line. 'The advent of this Chief is a great catch at the present moment,' but Rawlinson must see to it that he does 'no mischief while our guest.' And, 'you should not allow him to come to Cabool. I do not say this to avoid trouble to myself but embarrassment to our Government. There is a difference between the grant of any asylum and the reception of a refugee going out of his way for an interview with the ruler of the Country.'

It was an interesting ploy; should Persia object vigorously the whole thing could be passed off as something local between the Afghans of Kandahar and the Aga Khan. By then the British in Afghanistan could not afford too many hostages to fortune.

For almost thirty years since 1798 the British in India had sought to make Persia the strong buffer that would deter any potential invaders of India. In the early years of British rule in India the French were seen as the main enemy, later it would become the Russians. Very few amongst the British in India seriously expected the French or the Russian armies to pour through the North Western frontiers of India, more often the invasion scares were meant to convince London that the British in India needed to pursue expansionist policies in the subcontinent. Ever since Robert Clive's victory at the battle of Plassey in 1757 had started the British Empire in Bengal, local British agents had been expanding that foothold by playing off one Indian ruler against the other and pursuing their own individual ideas often at variance with what London desired. The threat of an external enemy helped these plans. But even if the British in India did not expect the Cossacks to march into India, by the time the Russians became the main bogey — round about 1815 they replaced the French — fears of the influence the Russians might acquire in Persia or Afghanistan played a big part in British plans. A considerable Russian influence in those countries, the British reasoned, could threaten the internal situation in India.

British India was a beleaguered fortress: inside the fortress were the inhabitants who had recently been subdued and could easily be seduced by an external enemy unleashing the very forces that the British most feared. Their constant dread was a sudden, unexpected insurrection, a situation familiar to Europe at that time. But whereas in Europe the population could

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be conciliated, in India there was no such margin. Anything could provide the spark: the dispossessed Nawabs and Rajas could rise, the population could be affected by an infringement of their religious or traditional rights, even the East India Company's native soldiers could mutiny.

By 1838 the British efforts to use Persia as a buffer had collapsed, with the new Persian ruler, Mohammed Shah, laying claim to Herat; the British now saw Afghanistan as the pivot of their Central Asian policy. Whereas with Persia the British had sought to be the most important power, but not to control the country, with Afghanistan the policy was very different. Afghanistan was to have full internal independence while Britain controlled all its external policy and excluded Persia and Russia from any influence in that country.

But as numerous conquerors have found, things on the ground were not so simple. Shuja was essentially a tribal chief and almost from the moment they arrived in Afghanistan the British had to contend with the clans and tribes who did not like them. This was not helped by the example set by Shuja, a clever if arrogant man, who surrounded himself with venal courtiers eager to follow his example of filling their own pockets.

By the end of 1840, discontent with his rule had spread to two of the principal tribes in Afghanistan: the Durranis and the Ghilzays. And it was in Kandahar, where the Durranis were most powerful, that the British needed to exercise great political skill. It was against this background that the British reacted to the Aga.

While Macnaghten was dithering about the Aga, Rawlinson met him. Rawlinson had immersed himself in the early history of the Ismailis, their origin, their growth and the god-like reverence with which the Aga Khan was held by his followers in various parts of Persia, Central Asia and India. But the first meeting went badly. 'The Khalifah of Ismaelees' as he called the Aga 'is a coarse-made, hard featured man and hardly as intelligent as I had expected to find him.'

More than looks, what probably worried Rawlinson was the extraordinary story the Aga Khan told and his quite fantastic expectations. He explained to Rawlinson that his arrival in Kandahar was 'no accident', as Rawlinson had described it, but the logical progression of the events of the last few years. The Aga's rebellion against the Shah had started in 1837 and he told Rawlinson that it was no coincidence that that year also marked the beginning of what Rawlinson called 'quasi-hostility with Persia.' He had communicated with the Government of Bombay who had provided encouragement and support and his very presence here in Kandahar proved that.

He pointed out that this journey to this western province of Afghanistan had been arduous and complicated. If his object had been merely to save his life, his most convenient route of flight out of Kerman would have been to the Persian Gulf port of Bander Abbas whence he might have embarked for Baghdad or Bombay — where he had numerous followers. But fortified by the messages he had received from Sir John McNeill, British minister in Tehran, and Major Todd, the British agent in Herat, he had reasoned that

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his best bet was to seek direct British help to see 'what your powerful arms can do for me.' So he had set out 'on a long and perilous journey through Central Persia with a party of 100 horsemen,' to try and contact the British in Kandahar.

Rawlinson found it hard to believe the Aga's interpretation of facts — or perhaps he did not want to. The Persians had always seen a British hand behind the Aga's rebellion, even the Russians believed this. But did the Aga Khan ever really receive replies to his communications to the Government of Bombay, Sir John McNeill, or Major Todd, other than general sympathy in his misfortunes? 'I do not for a moment believe [that],' concluded Rawlinson later.

He wrote that comment a year later when the Aga Khan was making huge claims on the British Government, but even if the facts had been otherwise nothing survives in the records to indicate that the Aga had been encouraged by the British. The first mention of his name in the Bombay Government records occurs with Rawlinson's letter of 6th August informing Macnaghten of the Aga's arrival.

Rawlinson courteously informed him that all he could hope for was asylum in the Afghan territory and 'a sum of money for the entertainment of himself and his horsemen during their stay in Kandahar.' Not surprisingly, 'the Khan was by no means satisfied with these terms and pressed to be allowed to proceed to Cabool and lay his case personally before the Envoy and Minister.' But Macnaghten would not hear of it. 'I beg you' he wrote to Rawlinson, 'that you will on *no account* permit the Agha Khan to come to Cabool.' A few days later the Aga did the best thing he could do: write a long letter to Macnaghten — the first of many that he and his family would write to the British Government over the years.

The letter was a strange, intriguing mixture of supplication, almost unctuous reverence and some fantastic claims. It had always been his desire, the Aga Khan told Macnaghten, to 'attach myself to your government'. For over a year he had been trying to make Macnaghten's acquaintance and in the previous year he had hoped to meet Macnaghten in Herat, 'but my ill-luck prevented my having a meeting with you.' Even now he feared, 'that I shall not have the wish of my heart which is to have the pleasure of meeting you, unless you will be kind enough to grant me that good fortune. It is properly known that I have left my country in the hope of receiving assistance from your Government and now I am anxious to know what your powerful arms can do for me.'

The letter was accompanied by an enclosure which set out the basic position of the Aga Khan. Here, he did not refer to any British encouragement to revolt against the Shah of Persia. In fact he ruefully recounted that he had sent an agent, Aga Muhamad Hossein, to the Government of Bombay, but though he had been there for a year, during which time the Aga Khan had fought many battles with the Persian government, he had heard nothing from his agent.

The revolt against the Shah was presented as a popular uprising, with the

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Aga Khan as the reluctant saviour of an oppressed people. So oppressive was the government that,

> all the respectable people and nobles of Persia, particularly those of Iraq, Fars and Kerman have been reduced to the lowest ebb of vexatious misery, the whole body of learned men, governors and chiefs induced me to throw off the yoke of the Persian allegiance and protect the wretched people, assist them to recover their privileges, so that the tyranny of the government might cease and the people of the country might not be destroyed.

Servants had not received pay for two or three years, nor were there any revenues left in the country. 'There is not a farthing in the Treasury, besides the lands ... now in possession of the Uthaks have been all ruined.' Persia was so poor, that 'all the nobles and respectable and learned men say that there is not a single person left in the Dominion of Persia that can feed fifty horsemen except myself.'

And to reconquer this impoverished Persia the Aga now offered the British all the help they required:

> I will undertake the conquest of Iraq, Fars, Kerman and Khorasan. I will seize the countries for you without the least trouble. If it be your intention to take Persia I pledge myself to gain it without loss for you, either from the direction of Khorasam or the sea ports of Kerman and Fars. No fighting will be necessary. The population will join and the disaffected persons will not delay to surrender themselves. In case you should object, you are at peace with Persia and I beg to inform you that it is known in that Country that I have friends in Turkestan, Budukshan, Cabool and Hindoos too. Allow me to assemble a body of men and having been joined by these in Persia, take that kingdom — I will proceed to conquer it by the seaports, Kerman, Fars, Bum and Leistan. If you think this plan of mine inadvisable you must lend assistance in some way or another, that I may prepare myself to take the Country and after this is done all Persia will be attached to the British Government.

Macnaghten certainly had no wish to take Herat, let alone conquer Persia. But he soothed his pill of rejection by describing the Aga as an 'honoured guest'. If he wanted to proceed 'in any other direction and are embarrassed for want of funds, pecuniary aid will be affected to you. I trust you will regard me as a sincere friend and one who is ever desirous to hear of your welfare and happiness.'

Privately Macnaghten told Rawlinson to 'feed the Agha Khan and his followers as long as they remain at Kandahar,' and was convinced that Rawlinson 'could do no wrong in playing with the Agha Khan as long as possible.'

The Aga, hardly in a playful mood, did not seem very sure of what he should do. The deterioration in the relations between Persia and India had

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affected the revenues the Aga received from his followers in India; he had heard nothing from his agent in Bombay, and he asked Rawlinson that he be allowed to proceed to Bombay 'to reorganise his followers in Western India.' Soon after this he heard from his agents in Kerman that his followers had won some notable victories; he immediately insisted on returning to Persia. But while Macnaghten was quite keen that he should go to Bombay — in fact was willing to give him a letter of introduction to the Bombay Government (provided it was understood that this did not mean any guarantee about his reception there), he was violently opposed to any return of the Aga Khan to Persia.

Though the Aga Khan continued to press Rawlinson to be allowed to proceed to Kabul, he did accept a grant of Rs 2,000 per month for his living and entertainment expenses.

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Legend had it that old Kandahar was the Alexandria of Alexander the Great, and the town the Aga Khan had come to bore the marks of the previous towns that various conquerors had constructed. Though it had been constructed by Ahmed Shah, less than a hundred years before, it already looked dilapidated and ruined. The walls that surrounded the city — forming, as one observer said, a rough oblong figure — were decayed, the ditch round it was in bad repair and some of the six gates that led to the city were bricked up as a result of fires in earlier battles. What distinguished Kandahar were its bazaars, with produce from Europe and Asia, and the cosmopolitan nature of the traders. Here you could find shawls from Kashmir, nankeens from Russia and hardware and trinkets from St Petersburg and Birmingham. There were also the spacious and quite exquisitely decorated houses of the local chief and nobles. It was one such house that had been allocated to the Aga Khan. A visitor described it well:

> We found the Prince (Aga Khan) in open court, surrounded by good buildings, entered through an embattled gateway. In the centre of this court was an elevated stage of brickwork and chunam (lime); on this was a large, low native couch, covered by a Persian carpet, as was also the platform itself. Light was given from large lanterns framed of wood and covered with thin gauze.

Here the Aga liked to receive visitors, particularly the British. Most of them were still discovering 'Eastern domestic manners', as one of them put it, and a Persian prince provided the right touch of mystery and wonder. The Aga quite lived up to this. He was a generous and, in British eyes, eccentric host. Wine and spirits were scarce in Kandahar then and generally of quite terrible quality, but to the Aga, a great drinker, a couple of bottles of wine before dinner was nothing remarkable.

The Britons were no less impressed by the informal court the Aga seemed to maintain. Servants, surrounding the couch the Aga normally reclined on,

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freely joined in the conversations of the Aga and his guests. They commented on the Aga Khan's witticisms and those of his guests, shared in the food before it reached the guests and even had a drag on the hookah that was passed round the guests. While all this was going on a man would try to produce music on a small guitar, accompanied by a shrill vocalist. On one occasion when an English guest wondered at the wild appearance of the musician, the Aga explained that he was required to take opium before his performance and really the music was incidental. Persian etiquette required that you pretended the musician was not there and carried on the conversation as before.

All this was a prelude to the Aga Khan's dinner, which for most of the English was quite fantastic. The Reverend N. I. Allen, Chaplain to the British troops in Kandahar, was present at one such dinner:

> Water was brought round, and we washed our hands. A large oval flap of cake, about one foot by a foot-and-a-half in extent, and about three quarters of an inch thick, was laid before each guest, to serve the threefold purpose of bread, plate and napkin.... Dish after dish was now brought in, placed without order or regularity, wherever vacant space appeared on the couch; rice, pilau, kabaubs, stewed meats, curries, hard-boiled eggs, several heterogeneous dishes, which I cannot attempt to describe. Into these, the guests, without scruple, plunged their fingers, placed a portion on the cakes, and then shovelled it into their mouths with the same instruments of nature's providing, the servants around freely taking toll of dishes as they came up, in like fashion. All this was dreadful.

Allen, in fact, quite enjoyed the entertainment provided by the Aga, as did most of the British in Kandahar that year — for it did much to relieve the boredom of a place where summer heat was such that it was virtually impossible to go out during the day, and there were few other means of diversion.

But such lavish hospitality had its price and the Aga was soon in debt. Within two months of arrival in Kandahar he had run up debts of four or five thousand Ducats (between Rs 20,000 to Rs 30,000), and he once again approached Rawlinson. Any British loan, said the Aga, could be repaid to the Bombay Government by his agent there who collected his tribute from his large Ismaili following in that city. Nothing seemed simpler.

But by now even Rawlinson was a bit tired of the Aga's 'extravagant habits', which despite his 'large command of money' invariably placed him in 'embarrassed circumstances'. Though he dutifully forwarded the Aga's request to Macnaghten he was not surprised when the request was turned down.

Macnaghten, worried that his action might 'give the holy man mortal offence', offered Rs 5,000 instead which the Aga accepted and later got his agent to repay to the Government of Bombay. Soon Rawlinson was again required to increase the Aga's allowance. Winter had both increased the cost and the nature of provisions needed to maintain the efficiency of the

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Persian horse. The Aga saw his allowance rise from Rs 2,000 to Rs 3,000 per month, made up of Rs 500 for him and Rs 25 per head for each of his men. As their number increased from 100 to 300, the Aga's total allowance rose to Rs 5,000 per month.

Rawlinson had cleverly shifted the monetary burden on to the pliant Afghans. The original Macnaghten terms were, it will be recalled, that the Aga Khan was a guest of the Government of Afghanistan — thus avoiding any embarrassment for the British. This meant, Rawlinson concluded, that the pension should also be paid by the Afghan Treasury and 'whenever the local revenues ... were more than equivalent to the expenses, the salary of the Khan was paid from the surplus.' By this time, the Aga Khan's followers in Sind and Gujerat had learnt that their Imam was living in Kandahar and the traditional and massive tributes now started flowing, relieving the Aga Khan of much of his financial problems — at least for the moment. But all this was of little consequence in the overall British position in the country which had become increasingly precarious.

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As we have seen, there had been revolts in Afghanistan ever since the British arrived. But these had been far from the main power centres and basically local in character. In November 1841 Kabul itself revolted. On 2nd November 1841, Alexander Burnes was attacked in his own home and killed. On 23rd December 1841, Macnaghten was also killed. The British garrison was small and it had been further weakened by the dispatch of troops to clear the passes between Kabul and Jallalabad to the east which had been blocked by Ghilzay tribes protesting about the reduction of the allowances by Macnaghten. Worse, the British commanding general was ill, and the military command was in the hands of subordinates with whom politicals like Macnaghten did not get on. By early 1842, the British had begun to withdraw from Kabul. It was to lead to one of the worst disasters in British military history. A party of 16,500 with 700 British, 3,800 Indian Sepoys, and their camp followers left Kabul for Jallalabad. Ten days later only one survivor, Surgeon William Bryden, staggered into Jallalabad — the rest had fallen victim to snow, cold and the quite ruthless attacks of the Ghilzay tribes.

Kandahar had escaped much of this carnage partly because General Nott, the commander of the British forces there, had preferred to keep his troops intact rather than try and rescue those in Kabul. Though the rebellion in Kabul had been ferocious, there was no great national feeling against the British. But the British had no illusions about Kandahar and while the fires in Kabul raged, Rawlinson was busy fuelling his own intrigues in relatively peaceful Kandahar. In these plans the Aga had begun to play a rather curious part. Soon after his arrival in Kandahar, he had informed Rawlinson that he had been in frequent touch with Yar Muhammed Khan Alikozay, the Wazir — or Chief Minister — of Herat. In strict theory, the real ruler of Herat was one Kamran Shah, but Yar

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Muhammed, a shrewd though cruel administrator, had won prominence for himself by pushing Kamran Shah into the background.

The Herat of that time was pretty barbaric, and Yar Muhammed was a despot who openly revelled in cruelty. He had quite shocked a British agent by declaring that it was far more satisfying to extract money through torture rather than through the normal process of collecting government revenue. And one British agent would leave a chilling picture of the methods Yar Muhammed used to raise money:

> The person generally was a Khan, who had enjoyed favour and was therefore supposed to possess wealth, or an executioner convicted of amassing wealth in the non-performance of his duties. The culprit was then put to the torture, the commonest method being by boiling or roasting or baking over a slow fire. The horrible ingenuities practised on these occasions are too disgusting to be more than alluded to. The wretch, writhing in agony, gradually disgorged his wealth and learned before he died that his wives and daughters had been sold to the Turkomans, or divided amongst the sweepers and servants of his murderers. Of two recent victims, one was half roasted and then cut into very small pieces, the other par boiled and afterwards baked.

The British seemed to have difficulty making up their minds about Yar Muhammed: occasionally wanting to annex Herat, occasionally just to remove Yar Muhammed, occasionally to seduce him with money and reform his more barbaric customs. Soon after his arrival in Kandahar, the Aga had become involved in some of these intrigues and was quite keen to act as a bridge between Yar Muhammed and the British. He even sent an agent to Yar Muhammed to persuade him to make a firm commitment to the British. In November 1841, as news of the British disaster in Kabul spread, alarming reports began to reach the British in Kandahar that Yar Muhammed himself was planning to launch an invasion towards Kandahar. It was a classical situation of rumour and counter-rumour and Rawlinson, trying to gauge the situation, often used the Aga's horsemen as couriers between Herat and Kandahar. One day — 6th January 1842 — one such messenger brought news that Yar Muhammed was now in open conflict with Kamran Shah. Rawlinson found this doubly welcome: Yar Muhammed would be too occupied to try and attack Kandahar, and Rawlinson could appoint his own man as Chief Minister of Herat. He couldn't quite decide who 'our man' in Herat should be. There were several candidates but nearly all of them were related to Yar Muhammed who had fallen out with him, and all likely to prove as unreliable politically as Yar Muhammed. Eventually Rawlinson decided that the only way he could secure for Britain 'direct and solid political advantages at Herat' would be to make the Aga the Chief Minister of Kamran Shah. He couldn't quite work out how this could be done. In the end nothing came of it, though Rawlinson had other uses for the Aga.

Even before the Kabul revolt, the Aga was almost the only reliable Muslim that Rawlinson had. Rumours had swept Kandahar that King Shuja

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himself supported revolts against the British. Such talk could be highly inflammatory and one day, quite suddenly, the Aga was summoned by Rawlinson. Very quickly Rawlinson explained to the Aga what he wanted. He wanted the Aga to forge some letters bearing Shuja's signature and sealed and addressed to Rawlinson clearly indicating how close Shuja was to the British. The idea was then to arrange for these letters to fall into rebels' — and potential rebels' — hands destroying their hopes that Shuja was on their side. The Aga dutifully did that.

But more ambitiously, Rawlinson saw the Aga as leader of the Shias against the Sunnis, the more dominant of the two great sects into which the Muslim world is divided. The Aga, of course, was leader of only a small Shia sect, and most of the Shias did not accept his claims to be the living God; but Rawlinson had found that the Shias in Kandahar recognized the Aga as one of their own and, as he would later put it, 'when Suonee and Sheeah prejudices were brought into antagonism at Kandahar, the latter party immediately showed a disposition to rally round the Ismailee Imam, as a natural head of their faith.' How much the Aga cared for these local differences is not known, but he evidently saw it as a splendid opportunity to establish 'a claim on British consideration' and soon a party of three hundred Shia horsemen under the Aga was established. The Aga resisted blandishments from the Durrani tribesmen to win him over to the anti-British cause, even captured letters the Sunni Durranis had written to the Kandahar Shias urging them to form a common religious front against the British. And when Rawlinson went on his morale-boosting village tours, the Aga was his constant companion. A year later, when Rawlinson came to plead the Aga's case before the Governor General of India, he had no doubt about his usefulness: 'to his increasing efforts and his powerful influence with this party it is, I think, to be mainly attributed that we were able to hold Kandahar so long and creditably and to leave it in such a state of comfort and efficiency....'

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But if the political Aga had his uses, his military role was somewhat more dubious. Rawlinson had been impressed by the Aga Khan's military experience and wanted him to be in charge of such of the Parsiwan horses that had remained loyal to the British (the Parsiwans were one of the smaller tribes based in Kandahar). Eventually the Aga was put in charge of about a hundred Parsiwan horsemen and fought various skirmishes of uncertain military value. In the first one on 12th January 1842, he was an enthusiastic volunteer but his services were not really required. On a later occasion, as General Nott marched out of Kandahar in pursuit of the Afghan enemy the Aga, with about 300 horsemen, protected the British rearguard and Nott thought his services deserved a special mention. The British were then carrying out an early version of the search and repulse tactics that the Americans followed in Vietnam and for a time in April and May of 1842 there were so few British troops in Kandahar that, particularly at night, Afghan rebels often raided the suburbs. The Aga and his troops

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patrolled the city and one night succeeded in capturing two of the rebel horses.

The Aga had even less success when in March 1842 Rawlinson decided to clear Kandahar of all Afghans suspected of rebel sympathy. The Aga's horsemen employed to do this proved so incompetent that Rawlinson had to do it all over again, using the regular troops of the East India Company.

As the fighting developed round Kandahar with sudden attacks by the rebels, followed by a quick British response, the rebels took to attacking the British early on Sundays at the time of religious services — their own version of Rawlinson's use of a somewhat different religious factor. On Trinity Sunday, 22nd May, just as the Reverend Allen was celebrating Holy Communion, the rebels attacked and the British force set out in such a hurry that Allen was left with two in his congregation, 'one of whom was not a communicant so that I was compelled to postpone its administration to another opportunity.' The Padre also found that the battle had denuded his evening service. But this one proved a false alarm and the great engagement took place exactly a week later.

The following Sunday, 29th May, Reverend Allen decided to hold a service at half past five in the morning. But no sooner had he started than there was another alarm and this was a genuine one. The rebels had gathered near Arghandab, and Nott decided to take the field with all his troops. Troops from India under General England had reinforced his positions, and he assigned the Aga and his horsemen to charging the cavalry of the rebels. Rawlinson rode with the Aga and recalled: 'I can speak positively to the Khan's gallantry in this instance as we rode together throughout the action; and his nephew was shot through the head in the charge by my side.' Nott would later ascribe the success of the British arms to superior equipment and the energy of the soldiers, particularly 'the Parseewan horses under their brave leader Agha Mahomed [who] also did great execution and were very instrumental in destroying the position of and following up, the enemy.'

For the Aga it remained one of the great moments of his life. In the years to come as he bombarded the British with supplications for money and position, this battle and his role in it formed the centrepiece of his 'services rendered to the British government.'

The Aga always saw himself at the centre of things and his account of the 29th May battle reads like an incredible military feat:

> I alone with about thirty followers remained and showed front to the enemy, although they numbered about a thousand sabres; they had completely intercepted our retreat. We then cut our way through them to a hill called Kotuili Moorchar. In the affair the Afghans behaved with great intrepidity and our horses were completely knocked up, in fact we were all on the point of either being killed or taken prisoner, when I together with my brother Sirdar Mahummed Bukur Khan and one of my Sowars named Bukur who is now at Kurrachee dismounted about half-way up the mountain and within view of Major Rawlinson I shot the

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foremost of our pursuers dead, whilst his comrades crowded round the body, my troops descended the hill and upon being informed of their having reached the foot in safety I and my two companions followed and rejoined the major.

This success now revived plans for a permanent British presence in Afghanistan centred on Kandahar. Rawlinson proposed the complete destruction of the Durrani nobles, distributing their lands to other tribes and establishing a new Afghan government with Muhammed Timour, Shuja's eldest son, as King. Kabul had been lost, but British strategists argued that in the military analysis Kabul was an irrelevancy. Kandahar controlled the route to Herat and this was the key to any invader who proposed to come to India through the North-West Frontier.

Rawlinson probably discussed these plans with the Aga, who certainly went away with the impression that the British would establish him as a contented Afghan 'landed proprietor', to quote one of his various claims. Nott, the Aga would later claim, promised him the Jaghir (large landed estate) of Moolah Rusheed, yielding an income of Rs 40,000 a year. (The problem is that the Aga in his various claims had the infuriating knack of never specifying details of when things were given to him, or the alleged promises made to him.) But if this be so, these dreams were cruelly shattered.

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In London, the Whigs had gone; the Tories did not share — or understand — the political strategies of Palmerston and Canning and, alarmed by the cost of sustaining Afghanistan, decided to pull out. Soon after they resumed power they replaced Lord Auckland as Governor-General of India with Lord Ellenborough — not a man to encourage the freelance political ambitions of men such as Rawlinson. Early in April 1842, Ellenborough had, in fact, ordered Nott to withdraw from Kandahar but this had never been carried out; now he firmly quashed the advice of what he called this 'whole monstrous body of political agents scattered everywhere and depending [for their] continued existence upon perseverance in the folly which called them into life.' The dig was clearly at Rawlinson, and the Afghans, Ellenborough said, would have to create a Government out of their own anarchy. He was prepared to accept any Afghan Government that wished to have friendly relations with Britain.

Rawlinson was still reluctant to leave and for a long time the British in Kandahar kept evacuation plans a secret. Rawlinson was concerned about what would happen to those who had supported the British and he proposed that the British should help establish a Parsiwan colony on the right bank of the Indus, which in five years' time he thought would amount to 20,000 families and be a British-supported counterweight to the Durrani tribes. Rawlinson drew up a list of twenty-one prominent chiefs who would be affected by their British connections and he made a strong plea for help for the Aga:

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> He would be obliged either to accompany us to the Southward or to make a rapid retreat to the Persian Frontier. Taking into consideration the danger of hostility from Persia which must accrue from our abandonment of Afghanistan, the political value of Agha Khan's attachment to our interests will necessarily be greatly increased and it would, I think, therefore be desirable to invite the Agha Khan to accompany us to India.

Ellenborough rejected Rawlinson's ideas, sarcastically commenting that 'he did not deem it necessary to protect the frontiers of the British Empire with colonies of Parseewans.' He was even more contemptuous of offering any assistance to chiefs like the Aga Khan who had supported the British. 'I wish to have nothing to do with any of them.' If they were friendly to the British, then, Ellenborough argued, they would be more use in Kandahar than in India. Eventually he relented sufficiently to allow Nott to help people whose lives would be in danger once the British had evacuated Kandahar. Rawlinson tried hard to persuade Nott to add the Aga to his list but Nott did not consider the Aga Khan in any great danger.

The Aga did not learn that the British were leaving till six days before their departure. As soon as he did he rushed in to see Rawlinson. What was happening? he asked Rawlinson. He had just learned from the bazaar that the British were going and he pleaded with Rawlinson 'for a present or loan to enable him to purchase carriages and accompany the army.' The Aga was once again in serious financial distress. The war had disrupted communications and with it the money his religious followers sent from Sind. The salary the British paid him barely covered his expenses, and the Aga found that he was unable to get commercial credit from a Kandahar bazaar. But Nott 'positively refused to advance him a single rupee,' and would not heed Rawlinson's fears for the Aga's life.

Rawlinson was convinced the Aga would be murdered. For the Aga these were perplexing, bitter weeks — and the depth of his bitterness would be directed towards Nott. Rawlinson, who had been his main — perhaps only — contact comforted him and suggested his best bet would be to try and follow the British. Maybe, he hinted, some other General like Major-General England would be able to help him.

But despite Rawlinson's fears, the Aga managed to stay there for a further six weeks and eventually borrow Rs 20,000 from two merchants by leaving his brother as security for himself and his money. Soon, he and his horsemen were on the move in the wake of the British. He reached Quetta on 5th October 1842, almost two months after the British had left Afghanistan. Here again he was disappointed — for in Quetta the Aga found that General England had come and gone — and was now in Sind.

The Aga was bewildered and embittered. He had done so much for the English, as he told everyone he met, but what had been his reward? And driven by the search for money, he did what countless others who claimed to help the British were doing — he drew up a long, self-justificatory

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petition. In some ways it marked the end of a certain phase in the Aga's life and the start of another. The warrior had been replaced by the petitioner in the classical historic change brought about by the British in India — now the Indian rulers in order to assert themselves instead of taking to arms took up the pen to petition the supreme power, Britain.

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Chapter 2

The Fantasising Refugee

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Some time in the winter of 1842, Major-General England received a long letter from a 'Mohamed Hussum Syed'. The letter contained a lengthy tale of woe and complained bitterly about the behaviour of General Nott, 'he deceived me with specious promises saying you have done so and so and will doubtless receive favourable consideration from the Sircar — how did he act in the end?' Major Rawlinson, said the letter writer, had told him that 'General Nott had no consideration for me, that I had better go to Shal and General England would see that I was paid.' He had missed the General in Quetta but wouldn't the good General now redeem his country's name and repair the damage done by General Nott who, throughout the Afghanistan campaign 'ill-treated the friends of the British Government and endeavoured to conciliate its enemies?'

Accompanying this was a longer letter addressed to the Governor General, and this time signed as 'Neer Mahomed Hussum', which did not mention Nott, but recounted the writer's services to the British Government in Afghanistan and asked to be paid Rs 20,000 for those services. It, too, ended with a plea to the Governor General to redeem British honour 'if the Governor General thinks that such services should go unrewarded without compromising the British character, I am content. Otherwise I am in hopes of a favourable answer and on orders from the merchants of Korachee to such an amount as may enable me to pay off my debts and to proceed to whatever place you may be pleased to allow me.'

These letters, at first, confused the British. For a start, Nott claimed he did not know any Persian nobleman of those names. The only Persian nobleman that he had known in Kandahar was the great grandson of Nadir Shah, the former King of Persia, who received a pension of Rs 50 from the British every month. Yes, he had come across a Persian refugee called Aga Khan. Eventually the British worked out that these letters were in fact from the Aga Khan, though England was surprised to receive them. He had never really known the man and had only met him in the company of Major Rawlinson who had spoken highly of the services he had provided.

The British in Calcutta were at a loss to know what to do about the Aga's demands when Major Rawlinson, once again, came to the rescue. Nott, while professing ignorance of the Aga, had suggested the major might help.

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The request could not have come at a better moment for Rawlinson. Like the Aga, the Afghan débâcle had left him in a sorry mess. The withdrawal from Kandahar had been made in such a hurry that he had had to leave his papers and documents behind. They were eventually sent on by ship, were lost and he was then asked by the Government to reconstruct the Kandahar accounts and justify his expenses. Also, while Nott and the others had earned kudos and medals, he had not even been mentioned. It was as he struggled to reconstruct his statement of expenses and justify his role that this enquiry about the Aga arrived. It was just the opening he wanted and he turned in a brilliant performance. The Aga could not have wished for a more eloquent propagandist.

Rawlinson first traced a short history of the Khan and his claims to descend from the prophet Mohammed. The British in India had just succeeded in eliminating a particularly vicious form of northern Indian bandits known as Thugs who, combining the baser instincts of Hindu religion with greed, terrorized travellers in that part of the country by strangling them. Some of the British in India had speculated that the Thugs were a branch of the Ismailites — both sects it was argued had strong religious ties to a particular leader. Rawlinson conceded that the Aga Khan followers were so devoted to him that they would readily kill in his name, but 'this feeling of blind and reckless obedience to the divine will is in no way connected with the horrid superstition of the Thugs, which gives a sacrificial and propitiatory character to their atrocities.' Though Rawlinson had found that there were a hundred Hindu families in Kabul believing in the divinity of the Aga Khan and still continuing to be Hindus, he was convinced that there was no connection between the Aga Khan and the Hindu Thugs.

Having laid the religious ghosts to rest Rawlinson then set out what he considered was the quite brilliant contribution made by the Aga to the British effort at Kandahar. It was a rich tribute and he had no doubt that the Aga Khan's 'unceasing efforts' had allowed the British to withdraw with dignity from that part of Afghanistan. Not that this meant that the British Government should pay him Rs 20,000.

'We are not liable for the amount in strict law, or even in honour, nor indeed do I think that the Khan stands in any need of our assistance to defray the debts.' The Aga Khan's revenues from western India alone were estimated to amount to two lakhs yearly (Rs 200,000 equivalent then to £20,000). And everywhere along the North-West Frontier province of India, Rawlinson had found that his followers were ready and willing to contribute enormous amounts: Rs 20,000 from Kabul, a lakh of rupees (Rs 100,000) from Peshawar, Lahore and Shukarpoor.

Here, Rawlinson the strategist took over. Paying something to the Aga Khan, he pointed out, would be good politics. It would 'mark in a most gratifying way his Lordship's sense of the Khan's services at Kandahar.' Rawlinson was shrewd enough to realize that the moment the Aga Khan arrived on British territory he would ask for asylum and a pension. He had come to Kandahar because he wanted British help to get back his Persian

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possessions and everything he had done at Kandahar had been with this aim in mind:

> Agha Khan's residence in the Indian territories will certainly be viewed with extreme jealousy by Persia and will in all probability be productive of much embarrassment to us, for the Khan will, as I think, assuredly continue to prosecute his intrigues in Kerman, and will hardly be withheld from the unauthorised employment of our name. On the other hand, should the Khan be obliged to quit India, dissatisfied with the British Government, he will in all likelihood take up his abode in Baghdad, to which place he has sent his family when he himself fled to Kandahar, and he will there be quite ready to place his influence and resources at the disposal of Turkey or Russia for the injury of Persia and, possibly to the serious prejudice of our interests.

Rawlinson's skill lay in presenting the Aga Khan case at just the right pitch. The process of Imperial expansion has been seen as a smooth linear development. In fact it was erratic, the greys mingling with the blacks to produce various unclear shades. The British slowly established their power in India, and the neighbouring states, by shrewd alliances with the local Satraps, now favouring one, now the other. Local Asian chiefs — Indian, Afghans, Persians — were a commodity the British regularly dealt with. Many came to them offering assistance and asking for this wonderful British pension with which the British rewarded their friends. The British had already begun to settle in that Imperial mould which inquired, 'Ask not O Chief what we can do, but what have you done for us?' Was the Chief faithful? Did his references stand up? Or was he part of the indistinguishable mass of Asians who could neither be trusted, nor really feared?

Rawlinson was quick to sense that for his protégé, the Aga Khan, he needed to hoe a very different line. The Government must be convinced that this was no ordinary chief, like the many others who claimed friendship and only wanted a perpetual pension. Friendship and affection for the Aga Khan may have prompted him, but more likely Rawlinson the political agent was still hoping to pursue those theories that he had so assiduously advanced while he was in Kandahar.

But the Aga Khan had made a demand for Rs 20,000 as compensation for his work in Afghanistan and the British in Calcutta were curious to know what could have merited such reward. For a start, they did not even know where he was. He was reported to be in the vicinity of Sind, and Charles Napier, commander of the British forces in Sind, (see illustration, page 99) was asked to provide information about his whereabouts. After missing Major-General England, the Aga had managed to stay with the Khan of Kelat for more than a month and it was only in November 1842 that he reached Sukkar in Sind, and made his 'salaams' to Charles Napier.

Rawlinson was sufficiently convincing for Ellenborough to inform Napier that he could employ the Aga. This introduced a further comical

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twist, for when Napier suggested that the Aga became an employee of the British East India Company, the Persian was quite dumbfounded. 'I don't want a job,' he said, 'I want 20,000 rupees.' Napier wrote to the Government, 'I do not clearly understand how I can employ this Persian nobleman Mahomed Hussein. This gentleman does not ask for employment, he wants a sum of money amounting to Rs 20,000 which he declares to be due to him by the company. Am I to pay this sum or any portion thereof?'

Ellenborough had meant that Napier should use the Aga's influence over the Ismailis in furthering British aims in Sind. Just as the Aga had arrived in Kandahar and found in Rawlinson a political agent of ingenuity and ambition, he arrived in Sind to find a British General who could always see personal profit in everything he did. In English history Napier has a colourful aura, much in keeping with the common, if misleading, view of the acquisition of the Empire. History as myth of course is always comforting. The British history of the acquisition of the Indian Empire is seen as one steady advance, mopping up the Indian states and replacing corrupt venal Indian rule by good British administration. A certain evangelical fervour did fire some of the British officials but the British had originally gone to India to trade and they never forgot that. Clive's victory in the Battle of Plassey in 1757 that set up the British Empire, was fought to protect the trading outposts of Calcutta. Subsequent British advances were almost invariably meant to secure the territory they already held. This set up the cycle that continued till the British consolidated their power in India. Sind was no exception.

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Described by one British traveller as a 'sloping surface of silt and sand', by the late-eighteenth century Sind was ruled by a family called the Talpurs. There was not one Sind but three: Lower Sind or Hyderabad, Upper Sind and Mirpur — and they were all ruled by chiefs called Amirs. For much of the eighteenth century the British interest in Sind was mostly commercial, though it was also seen as a buffer state between India and possible invasion from Russia or other countries in central Asia. It was, moreover, useful to hold the bandits that roamed that part of the world.

Occasionally, the British and Sindian forces clashed and the Bombay Government, more intimately concerned about these things, began to propose that Britain wage war against the Amirs. But this was never accepted by Calcutta and non-intervention remained a policy until the British invasion of Afghanistan. Then the British, required to protect their Afghan supply routes, forced the Amirs to allow British troops to pass through their territory. It may have been seen as a temporary move; it proved to be the thin end of the wedge. As the British withdrew from Afghanistan, Sind became the next convenient battleground. Even then, but for Lord Ellenborough's policies and Napier's ambitions, Sind might never have become British. As Mountstuart Elphinstone, one of the great heroes of the early Raj, would put it later, the British conquered Sind in

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the spirit of 'a bully who has been kicked in the streets and goes home to beat his wife in revenge.' The Amirs would pay for the success of the Afghans.

Most of the British officials detested the Amirs and their administration; they were barbaric in ruling a primitive, bigoted people. Sind, the British reasoned, would be much better off under their rule and war in Sind would mean honour and reward.

When Napier arrived in Sind, the British were still trying to play the nanny game there — if of a rather severe kind. If the Amirs misbehaved, or broke any of the various treaties they had signed with the British over the years, they were to be punished. Or as Ellenborough put it in his letter to Napier of 26th August 1842, asking him to command British troops there, any disloyalty would mean 'a penalty which shall be a warning to every Chief in India.' Napier had other ideas. He had long dreamt of a forward British position that included the whole of the river Indus — at one stage he saw the frontier of British India as including Kabul and Kandahar, and this strategic vision was allied to evangelical fervour and a nice interest in money. Napier was also a brilliant general who had often demonstrated both tenacity and ruthlessness. He had arrived in Sind a bitter man, resentful of the obscure commands he had been given and the ill-treatment at the hands of men superior in position but inferior in talents. There he suddenly found he could realize some of his long dormant ambitions. (Napier's share of the Sind booty after he had finally won the war was to amount to £70,000.)

After his appropriation of Sind he is supposed to have sent a famous one-word telegram, 'Peccavi' — I have Sinned. The myth was so strong that, almost a hundred years later, Geoffrey Moorhouse, being taught the Latin perfect tense from Kennedy's primer in a Lancashire class room, found his classics master narrating this story. Napier, in fact, never sent any such telegram, and it was a pun composed by an anonymous *Punch* contributor three years later when British policy in Sind had become a party political issue in London.

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In all this the Aga played a curious, much disputed role. Biographers of the Aga, seeking to portray him in the best possible light, have pictured him as helping Napier conquer Sind. His role was much more limited, even at times dubious.

The Aga himself, in his various letters to the British, never provided any precise verifiable details of the 'services' he claimed to have rendered. His object was invariably to claim money and he preferred vague statements which were inclined to extol unspecified services and to suggest that some British general or political agent had all the details of those services and must have acquainted the Government with them.

It is possible that soon after his arrival in Sind the Aga met the Amirs. They too were Shias, though not followers of his, and he impressed on them the power and authority of the British. In January 1843, the Aga Khan met

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Napier and offered to help, and the following month he was again trying to get the Amirs to see British reason.

Even more intriguing was his involvement in the Outram affair. Major James Outram was the political agent in Sind but, following Ellenborough's order that political agents should be subordinate to the military ones, Outram was made to hand over control to Napier. Before Napier had arrived, Major Outram had been playing the nanny game with some success, hoping to establish a strong British presence in Sind. As part of this policy he had accumulated considerable evidence of the Amirs' alleged treachery and bad faith: many of these charges were hearsay, unreliable and quite minor. But for Napier this was sufficient. He made it the basis of sweeping demands.

The Amirs held a grand Durbar to consider the treaty that Napier proposed and the Aga probably attended this meeting. Napier had ordered Outram to conduct the detailed negotiations. Even as these were going on Napier, arguing that the Amirs were merely buying time, attacked them. The day before the Durbar was held, Napier stormed and took the deserted fortress of Imamgarh. The next day the terrified Amirs agreed at the Durbar to British terms, though some of them were embittered by Napier's action. But according to the Aga that night one of the Amirs emerged from the fort at Hyderabad and pitched his tents in a garden, preparing to fight the British. When the Aga heard of this he advised against it but the Amir was defiant. 'It is impossible to avoid fighting and the might of the Talpur sword will be shown tomorrow. I will on the following morning first remove Colonel Outram and then proceed against the General.'

The Aga returned the same night to Hyderabad and informed Outram to expect an attack in the morning. The next morning the Amirs came out of the fort ready to fight and, though the Aga seems to have persuaded some of them not to attack, others did. Though Outram, according to the Aga, accepted that he had received warnings of the attack, he always maintained it came as a surprise and this led to a breach between Napier and Outram that reverberated for years. Almost eight years later Sir William Napier, brother of Charles, writing a history of Napier's Sind would state that 'He [the Aga Khan] knew of the Ameers' designs to assail the Residency, had remonstrated against it, and afterwards gave such information as to render Outram's imbecile vanity on that occasion most painfully prominent.'

Napier himself asked the Aga for a written report on this and forwarding it to the government used it to justify his belief that the Amirs had planned this assault carefully and Outram was gullible enough to be taken in by their peace protestations. 'I believe Major Outram was the only Englishman that believed this trumped-up story of the Ameers.' This testimony, though, needs to be treated with care. Napier by then was openly at war with Outram; he had been criticized for his freelance conquest of Sind, even his war honours had been withheld and a treacherous Amir attack was necessary to justify his own decision to go to war. The attack on the Residency was all the *casus belli* Napier required. He attacked Hyderabad and defeated the Amirs in the battle of Miani in February 1843. Only one prominent Amir remained: Sher Muhammed of Mirpur.

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Napier had been quite impressed by reports of the Aga's bravery, and his supposed religious influence, and was delighted with his offer of sixty horsemen. He accepted this with alacrity and asked him to protect British communications between Karachi and Hyderabad. Some British officers had been killed on this route and the Aga was posted to Jherruk with orders to stop the bandits who had begun to threaten life and supplies. He was soon in his element. He reported back to Napier on the movements of Sher Muhammed and even proposed writing to him to point out the error of his ways, offering to act as mediator between him and Napier.

However the British found that the Aga rhetoric did not match actions and Hyderabad was just as unreliable as before, if anything worse. Also the Aga himself quickly became very unpopular in Jherruk. Then no more than a small hill town, Jherruk's inhabitants did not take kindly to the Aga's attempt to behave like a king. He issued a proclamation to the inhabitants to feed and lodge his horsemen — they numbered 200 by now — levied a tribute and acted in a manner that suggested a permanent residence. Richard Burton, a lieutenant of the Bombay army, has left us a graphic description of the Aga Khan's lifestyle. The account is coloured by the prevailing prejudices of the age — the whole thing is written as a direct address to John Bull — but it forms one of the few first-hand accounts of the Aga Khan's life during that period.

> Some weeks the Agha spent in his new kingdom, leading a life after Sancho Panza's own heart; perhaps exceeding a little in the drinking and love-making lines. His followers following his example, 'ate, swilled and played' till Jerruk became another Nineveh on a very small scale. The Belochies, having nothing better to do, had threatened to attack it a dozen times or so, and the Agha laughed at their beards. Were they not hogs of Sunnis? Had he not dishonoured all their mothers? And had he not done the strangest possible things to their fathers' graves? Whose dogs were they that they should dare to face the death-dealing scimitar of the Iroonee [native Iranian pronunciation of his country's name]?

But though the Aga was impervious, threats against his life and his followers began to be made. Sher Muhammed had found other allies and they promised to deal with the Aga for joining up with the British. On 23rd March the Aga was relaxing at his 'palace' when a man arrived. Burton takes up the story again:

> One evening the Agha had just finished his dinner and was preparing for a game of backgammon or chess, which he was sure to win, as no man dared to win it from him; the drinking cups and the bottles were ranged in a line before him; the musicians were twanging and howling in a corner of the room ... when all of a sudden, half-mad with fear, rushed in an unfortunate Scindee bringing intelligence that a body of at least fifty thousand Belochies had arrived within a mile of Jerruk, and that he

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himself had seen them, and had hurried on to give the Agha warning, lest he and his heroes should be attacked unawares.

But the Aga, instead of heeding the message, turned on the messenger. 'Seize that pup of unmarried parents, here with the pole. Where are the rods, ye dog-papas?' Soon the messenger had been tied to two staffs held by two of the Aga's men while others lashed his soles and his toes. As they did so the Aga, quite beside himself, shouted 'Wurin, Wurin', strike, strike. Eventually the wretch fainted with pain and loss of blood and the Aga, 'with a wave of his hand', signalled the executioners to stop. But the messenger had been right.

> Scarcely had the wretched Scindian's lacerated stumps been stuck in a neighbouring dunghill — the recognized treatment for the complaint under which he was labouring — when down came the Belochies upon Jerruk, in the most ferocious and rapacious moods. [Burton thought there were not 50,000 but 500 of them]. Finding no arrangements made to oppose them, they scaled the puddle parapet, dashed into the town, cut to pieces every beardless man [at that time young Persians, like young Turks, shaved their beards] they met, and although they failed to secure the august person of the Agha, they did not fail to appropriate the contents of his cellar and harem. The potentate lost much valuable property in wines and other liquors. It was some weeks afterwards that he recovered his wives; and when he did, he did not appreciate the value of the goods in question.

The Aga did escape with his life but in the process fell from his horse and was severely hurt. The attack had a traumatic effect on him, and along with his Kandahar exploits would now form a constant part of the various petitions for money and consideration that he rained on the British in the years to come. In none of these did he provide any precise details of how it took place — or how many were killed.

Whatever the numbers, the incident did much to make the British think that the Aga's military prowess was not all that he had cracked it up to be. Outram, arguably no great friend of the Aga (though the Khan continued to claim a friendship with him for a long time), was convinced that the attack proved the Aga was a coward.

Within a month Napier had to use the 15th Native Infantry — regular company troops — to occupy Jherruk and found that the Aga had done more damage than good. As he wrote to Ellenborough: 'With regard to his employment he has been useless.... At one time he began putting people to torture.... It requires to be very firm or he would quickly produce an insurrection. He is daring, violent and his sect is very much disliked by the people.'

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Napier did seek retribution for the attacks on the Aga and even recovered

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his plundered property, but the Aga and his men played little or no further part in the conquest of Sind. On 26th March 1843 Napier fought Sher Muhammed and defeated him in the battle of Hyderabad, and although Sher managed to escape from the battlefield, in another three months, on 13th June 1843, the British finally caught up with him. Then John Jacob, the commander of the Sind Irregular Horse, defeated him and by August 1843 Sind was wholly British.

After the conquest the Aga returned to Jherruk and once again set up home there, though neither he nor his followers were any more popular — in fact quite actively disliked by the people of Sind. The Aga too resumed the sort of intelligence-gathering role he liked best, sending Napier details of secret movements of the Afghans at Kandahar who had allied themselves with the Balochis of Sind, of plans to launch a holy jihad against the British and information about the conditions in Persia and the growing border problems between Persia and Turkey. There was, of course, something about the man that got to Napier. Even in the letter dismissing his military worth, Napier had written, 'We are very good friends and I am civil to him ... he is a pleasant, jolly sort of fellow in society and I am told means to give me a dinner.' Napier's civility may have been due to the fact that he was hoping to get a Persian cat from the Aga but his ancestry, the extreme devotion of his followers, and his innate flamboyance also appealed to Napier. In a letter to Ellenborough written in November 1843, he provided an interesting portrayal of the man:

> He is a God — his income immense. He lets none of his sect kiss his hand under twenty rupees, and he is the greatest rascal possible; that is a clever, brave man but being a God makes a virtue out of any sin he likes to commit. I speak truly when saying that his followers do not and dare not refuse him any favour he asks, wives, daughters, slaves, money, houses, furniture, all are his and he doesn't let the privilege grow rusty. However, I put an end peremptorily to his rights whenever any of his people choose to resist him which is awkward for the divinity of the 'Old Man of the Mountain'.

Napier had caught the contrast well. The God-man who was also a sensuous, feudal Lord, a religious man who used religion to justify the most pleasure-seeking secular comforts.

In an age more full of wonders than our own, this was still something of a wonder for the British. By the time the British in India encountered the Aga Khan, much of the early wonder of India had degenerated into racial stereotypes. The British liked those who had fought them, scorned the ones who had meekly submitted; and though they had formed alliances with the native princes — both Hindu and Muslim — the stigma of their being members of a subject race clung to them. A Persian was different. The British in Persia might contrast the wretchedness of the country with that of England, British envoys could speak of the utter worthlessness of the ministers and rulers they had to deal with, but there was a respect for a free people with a long and glorious history.

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The British were just beginning to fashion their own racial ideas and British travellers in Persia would often contrast the wonderful mien of the Persian with, say, the 'withered black ape-like' features of the Hindus and other non-Persians. The Aga's mind may have been feudal, seeing the limits of his lands as the limits of the world, his followers as the only people — but by then the British were quite at home with Asian feudals. It was the modernizing Asians who worried them.

Aga Khan Mehalatee would continue to wander for many more years, but the conquest of Sind marked a watershed in his life and the development of his family. He was never again to take up arms in a serious way, and from now on it would be politics and diplomacy that would decide his fate. This, then, is a useful point at which to look back on his early years and the rise of the First Aga Khan.

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Chapter 3

The Search for a Home

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Aga Khan I claimed, as did his predecessors and successors and descendants, descent from the family of the prophet Muhammed. Muhammed's death in AD 632 started a succession crisis which finally exploded when Ali, the prophet's cousin and husband of his daughter Fatima, took over the Imamate. Ali's succession led to civil war and scarred Islam soon after it had been established, and led to the rise of various sects each claiming to be the true faith. The two main Muslim sects are the Sunnis, the majority, and the Shias, the minority. While Muslim theologians are often keen to gloss over the differences between the two sects, there is sufficient historical evidence to show that they have always hated each other, often with murderous results.

The bone of contention is the authenticity of the Imam and the interpretation of Muslim history after the death of Muhammed. Muhammed was succeeded by Abu Bakr, then Umar Ibin al Khattab, and then Uthman. It was Uthman's murder in AD 644 that brought Ali to the Imamate and led to the civil war and the splitting of the Muslims into Shias and Sunnis. While the Sunnis accept Ali as the last of the four rightly guided Caliphs of Islam, the Shias have grave doubts about the three Caliphs who preceded Ali, and place Ali on a pedestal almost equal to that of Muhammed as the Apostle of Allah. In the Sunni tradition, the Caliphs who succeeded Ali were heads of the community, administrators of justice and defenders of the Islamic realm, but not possessing any divine powers. They owed their office to either the choice of the community or the nomination of their predecessor. To the Shias, Ali was not only the rightful successor to Muhammed, but his successors were divinely-appointed rulers and teachers of the faithful who had succeeded to the prerogatives of the prophet himself. He possesses superhuman qualities which descend to him from the first man, Adam, through Muhammed, a divine light which is given to chosen mortals from generation to generation. In some popular Shia traditions, the Imam's body throws no shadow and he cannot be physically harmed.

The Shias were not a homogeneous group. Over the years and centuries they too split, with each group claiming its leader to be the true Imam and the true lineal descendant of the prophet Muhammed. The most

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significant of the Shia groups are the 'Twelvers' or Imamites, who recognize the twelve Imams in the Ali-Fatima line which ends with Muhammed al-Mahti. He disappeared from the world in AD 880 and the Twelvers await his second coming as Mahdi, when the hidden Imam will be revealed and restore justice and righteousness to the world. All the various Shia sects have this hope though they differ in expecting a different man to reappear. The birth of any religion is attended by discord. Christianity sprouted many sects in its early days, but the Islamic schisms were accompanied by a certain ferocity which lingered long after the original break — and coloured all subsequent history. While the early Christian sects are lost to history, those of Shia Islam are still part of our contemporary life and just as contentious.

The early origins of the Ismaili sects are obscure and despite considerable research by scholars, not properly established. The word seems to be derived from Isma'il, the eldest son of the sixth Imam. He died before he could succeed his father and his father bestowed the Imamate on his younger son, but certain Muslims clung to Isma'il as the true Imam — and the Ismaili sect grew up as a heretical group challenging established authority. In its early days it was an active reformist group with, or so its Sunni opponents said, a neo-communist platform that spoke of riches being shared and distributed according to need. But as it spread it acquired the trappings of power, particularly during the Fatamid dynasty in Egypt. Its most feared phase was undoubtedly during the time of the Assassins. It was the legends of the Assassins, their fantastic and fanatical leader, the Old Man of the Mountain — as he was known to the Crusaders — and the methods he used, including drugs, torture and sex, to convince his supporters that they had indeed attained Paradise which provided the Ismailis with their most colourful legends.

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Though the early Ismailis had been persecuted and had defensively developed the concept of Takiah, or concealment of true religious feelings, to protect themselves and propagate their faith surreptitiously, the Persian rulers had for some centuries treated the Imam of the Ismailis with respect and consideration. The Persians were aware of their devoted followers, and the wealth they acquired from them: a tenth of the profits or earnings accruing to every Ismaili went to the Imam. In the eighteenth century when Nadir Shah had invaded India, plundering and looting his way to Delhi, the Ismaili Imam accompanying the Persian army energetically added converts to his sect. The Aga's father Khallilulah had himself been honoured by the Shah who was so impressed by his wealth that he had invited him to Teheran, and despite the religious differences, allowed him to marry a princess of the royal family.

British travellers in Persia first began to hear about the Ismaili sect in the early part of the nineteenth century. Between 1821 and 1822 James Fraser journeyed into Khorasan and some of the countries to the north-east of Persia and heard the legends of the Ismaili leader and his supporters. In his travels he passed through Muzeenon and in the ruins there came across two monuments, one of which was said to contain the bones of 'Seyd Ismael,

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considered by the Ismaelites or Hussanees as the last legitimate Imam and founder of that sect of Mahomets.'

Fraser was not much impressed with the way the ruins were looked after, but there was no doubting the devotion of the followers to the religious leader. Then, the Imam of the Ismailis was not called Aga Khan (Aga being a title given in Persia to those who have rights to collect revenue, and one that the First Aga Khan, Rawlinson's friend, acquired in somewhat mysterious circumstances).

The Aga's father (1790-1817) was in fact called Shah Khallilulah. He lived in Yezd in Persia, had one hundred gholaums (servants) and Fraser was told by a Persian, Meerza Abdool Rezak, of the tremendous reverence with which his Indian followers treated him:

> One day while he [Meerza) was paying him a visit the Saint was employed during their conversation in paring the nails of his hands and feet which the Meerza picked up from the carpet to throw away, when an Indian of the sect who was in the chamber, seated at a respectful distance, prevented him from doing so by a significant gesture. When he [Meerza] left the room the Indian followed him and most earnestly begged him for the nail parings as a most precious possession which the Meerza, inwardly laughing at the man's superstition, after a while gave him. In like manner the shavings of his head, the water he washed in and such offals were preserved as valuable relics by his followers; and instead of paying wages to his servants he would frequently give them one of his old robes which, cutting into pieces, they would sell at a high price to the pilgrims who came to visit the Saint.

But Khallilulah was an active supporter of the Governor of the province, Mohamed Zeman Khan — a tyrannical despotic ruler. Khallilulah often assisted the Governor in his less than welcome duties and some time in 1818 the people of Yezd rose in rebellion and killed Khallilulah. The actual killing seems to have been started when some of Khallilulah's servants, probably trying to extort money, had a violent quarrel with two shopkeepers in Yezd. The enraged shopkeepers pursued them back to Khallilulah's house and murdered him. At that stage, Khallilulah was once again being visited by followers from India, many of whom died trying to save their living god. One Indian phelewan [an Indian wrestler] placed himself before the doors of the chamber which led to where Khallilulah was and kept it closed with his powerful arms until he finally fell covered with wounds.

If the people of Yezd felt liberated, in distant Teheran the Shah was concerned. He feared that he would be held responsible by 'the dangerous sect of the Ismaelites for the death of their sacred chief.'

The murderers had been killed by Khallilulah's men on the spot. The Shah, as Robert Watson put it in his nineteenth-century *History of Persia*, severely punished and flogged their ringleader, accepted Khallilulah's young son as the chief of the sect and added considerable property to the estates the boy had already inherited. It was probably then that the Ismaili

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Chief received his title, Aga Khan Mahellati or Mehalatee, Mahellati being the province of that name whose governor the Shah had made the young boy — though the origin of 'Agha' is more interesting.

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Rawlinson, in his journey from Tabriz to Takhti-Soleiman in October and November 1838, would come across the use of the title Agha by the Mikri tribe of the country. All the land in that part of the country was originally the property of one family, the Baba Anireh, but they allowed others to cultivate it. These 'inferior leaders', as Rawlinson put it, were called Agha. The Aghas in turn hired others to do the work of cultivation, both acting as an agent for the government and taking a share of the produce. The interesting thing about this is that the Mikris were Sunnis of Kurdish extraction in Shia Persia, and owed little or no allegiance to Teheran. Too powerful to be coerced they were lightly taxed, and when there was no conflict with the Sunni beliefs they readily supported Teheran.

For nearly twenty years after the Yezd murders little was heard of the young Aga Khan. He governed the provinces of Mahallat and Qumm and he apparently lived peacefully without too many problems. Frequent changes of governors were quite the norm in Persia then. Fath Ali Shah Qajar, the second of the Qajar dynasty to rule Persia, was then still trying to establish control over his country. Renowned for his long black beard and his several hundred wives and children, his system of rule was to appoint his sons as governors and try and play off tribal antagonisms. The real problems arose when Fath Ali died in 1834, leaving no clearly defined successor.

The son who had been groomed to succeed him, Abbas Mirza, a man who might have modernized Persia and changed its fortunes, had died of dropsy a year earlier. Just before he died, Fath Ali had nominated Abbas Mirza's fat son, Muhammed Mirza — much taken by Napoleon — as his successor, but this did not prove very acceptable. Fath Ali had other sons, governors of powerful provinces and Muhammed Mirza had to wage one of those all too familiar campaigns of despotic murders and torture before he succeeded his grandfather as Shah (two rivals were blinded, others made to flee and most of the supporters of his rivals purged from the government). Muhammed Shah had been successful because the British and Russian ambassadors had lent him powerful support, both countries contending for power and influence in Teheran and their respective ambassadors having judged that Muhammed Shah was the best bet. The British had given him £30,000 and British troops had helped defeat his enemies in a crucial battle that ensured the succession. If the British had thought this would buy their influence they were soon to be disillusioned.

One of the provinces that had proved particularly difficult to suppress had been Kerman in southern Persia. Even in rebellious Persia this had been especially prone to revolt. Four years earlier, Abbas Mirza had used British help to put down a rebellion there, a rebellion initiated by the Governor of the province, Hasan Ali Mirza, who was also a brother of Abbas. Many

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years before, the Aga Khan's grandfather had been governor of Kerman, and Muhammed Shah, now keen to use the Ismaili leader's influence in southern Persia, appointed him the new Governor of the province. But the Aga's administration proved to be so unsatisfactory that the Shah was forced to replace him. In 1835 he was removed and disgraced. Kerman, however, being always resistant to control, none of the Aga's successors could even attain his limited standards. To maintain any sort of order required a large military force and, in 1836, the Aga was back.

Despite the recall the Aga appeared to have been burned by the humiliation of the initial dismissal, at least that is what Rawlinson would come to believe. In his report to the Government, which we have discussed earlier, he would say that 'the indignation which he [the Aga Khan] felt at his recent ill-treatment, operating upon a character naturally restless and ambitious induced him to ... proclaim the independence of Kerman and to set the power of the Shah at defiance.'

The Aga in his various letters to the British government seeking help and money saw the revolt in populist terms; the Aga as the people's friend came to rescue them from the tyrannical Muhammed Mirza. Thirty years later, when some of his discontented followers challenged his claim to be the Imam of the Ismailis and his right to collect tribute in the Bombay High Court, he would present a history of Persia written by an anonymous Persian which adduced, as we shall see, more romantic, personal reasons for the rebellion.

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The new Shah had inherited as his chief minister or Vizeer a certain Qa'im Maqam, the same man who had advised his father, Abbas Mirza. Neither the British nor the Russians liked him, each denouncing him as a tool of the other power. The Qa'im Maqam was an inflexible man and as his unpopularity grew Muhammed Mirza decided to do away with him. On 26th June 1835 Qu'im Maqam and his family were strangled. His successor was a certain Haji Mirza Aghasi, a Sufi ascetic fond of astrology and prophecy. According to the history presented by the Aga in the Bombay High Court case of 1866, this minister, 'a Persian of very low origin, formerly in the service of the Aga Khan' had 'the impudence to demand the marriage for his son of one of the daughters of the Aga Khan.' This so insulted the Aga that he indignantly refused it and, then fearing the wrath of the all-powerful minister, took to arms as the best means of defence.

How likely this story is we have no means of knowing, for the High Court judge who gave credence to the story did not even mention the name of the Persian historian. The Aga may have been playing on the fact that Aghasi had made himself unpopular with both the British and the Russians in Teheran who disliked his loud, shrill voice, his shabby clothes and his strong desire to make Persia as strong as it was during the reign of Nadir Shah.

Robert Watson, who was attached to the British mission to Persia, in his history of the period asserted that the Aga Khan's Kerman revolt was an opportunistic one designed to take advantage of the problems faced by Muhammed Shah. Watson suggests that his recall to Kerman in 1836 was

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itself the result of a forgery. Alarmed by the movement of the Shah's army towards Mahalat, the Aga dispersed his followers, sent his family on a holy pilgrimage to Kerbela in Iraq — the holiest shrine of the Shias — and

> then unencumbered, he crossed by paths the country lying between the plain of Hamadan [which formed part of Mahalat] and the remote cities of Yezd and Kerman. At Kerman he produced forged letters by which he was appointed governor of that place; a position he was soon called upon to maintain by force of arms, for the real governor returned from Ispahan, and hastened to meet the usurper in the field.

Whatever the exact reasons, the next four years were to see the Aga Khan in constant conflict with the Shah and his forces in southern Persia. He was probably encouraged by the fact that within a year British relations with Persia reached a nadir and, towards the end of 1838 Britain cut all diplomatic ties with the country.

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The Aga Khan was also encouraged by the mounting military problems of the Shah. In the summer of 1836 the Shah had attacked the Turkoman tribes in the east. For some time Turkoman slavers had been preying on Persian pilgrims travelling to Mashhad and the Persians claimed they wanted to put a stop to these raids. Despite a huge expedition — twenty-eight thousand men and forty-four guns — the campaign failed and the Shah made a humiliating retreat. The Aga drew the appropriate moral from this. It was after this defeat that the Shah turned to Herat, forcing a break with Britain.

For the Aga the British withdrawal was a spur; he saw in this — or claimed he saw — Britain's desire to rid Persia of Shah Muhammed Mirza and to help restore the Aga to his former possessions. Subsequently, in 1842, writing to the Governor General, the Aga would confidently state:

> I have frequent correspondence with the Hon'able the Governor of Bombay who expressed himself highly pleased with me and also with Major Todd at Herat who promised and also wrote that you are to oppose Mahommed Shah, I have received instructions from Government to reimburse you any expenses that you may incur ... and from McNeill Sahib [British envoy in Teheran] I received many promises through the Hindoo merchants and were I to relate one half of them they would give you a headache.

It is, of course, possible that the Aga Khan was trying to make a smoother connection than existed of his association with the British. He was, after all, writing begging letters for money. Though British records have no evidence of such letters, the Persians slowly came to believe that the British were indeed supporting the Kerman rebel.

Initially the Aga had gained unexpected success. In September 1837 he

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attacked the well-fortified fortress of Bam, near Kerman. The Shah's men were well equipped and had artillery, but some of them were secret Aga Khan sympathizers; they betrayed their leader, and the Aga quickly occupied the fortress.

The Aga had chosen his moment well. In those years Persia gave a very passable imitation of a country in complete anarchy. Just as the Aga was tasting success at Bam, Yezd where his father had been murdered was thrown into turmoil and confusion. The high priest there, a man of distinction and revered by the locals, had a ravishing wife. She was coveted by the Governor of Yezd, a brother of the Shah. One day the wife, who was a cousin of the governor, visited his house and was seduced by the governor. He now tried to get the high priest to divorce his wife, but when the priest refused and sent his wife away on a pilgrimage he seized the priest and had him strangled. Elsewhere, not long after that, the Shah's deputy minister for foreign affairs was detected forging the Shah's handwriting. The Shah was so enraged that he was about to have him strangled but the presence of the Russian ambassador saved his life; the man was severely flogged on the soles of his feet.

The Aga not only repulsed all attacks on Bam but, by January 1838, managed to acquire another fort, Kaleen, half-way between Bam and Kerman. By now McNeill, the British minister in Teheran had begun to detect 'considerable apprehension' about the safety of Kerman.

There were rumours that the Aga had formed an alliance with the people of Sistan and the armies of Beloochees. However, by the end of the summer of 1838 the Shah's men finally got a force together under the real governor of Kerman, Firuz Mirza, who quickly engaged the Aga's army. Then, if Watson is to be believed, although the Aga had also gathered a large force, the night before the battle his troops melted away and he was forced to flee, first to the fortress of Lar and, afterwards, having been chased out of there, to the adjoining mountains to while away the hot summer months.

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Another source has it that the defeated Khan was sent to Teheran where he seemed to have been well received by the 'low-born' Aghasi, and even allowed to return to the Governorship of Qum and Mehallat, the latter providing the Aga with the title Mehalatee.

One British officer reported that the Aga was tricked into surrendering on the promise of a pardon but was then taken to Teheran. If the exact historical version of this battle escapes us, it is almost certain that some time in 1839 the Aga Khan was in detention in Teheran — for early in 1840 he escaped and arrived back at Mehallat. He quickly sent his family away again to Kerbela for a pilgrimage, made noises suggesting he would soon be joining them but began making preparations for another attack on Kerman. By the summer he seemed to have got together 1,000 good horses and set out on the route to Kerman. Along the way he appears to have added to his supplies by plundering and issuing 'firmans' displacing existing governors and asking the people to wait for further orders from the Aga. One of the Shah's men did try to stop him but he had a mere fifty horsemen and the Aga soon put him to flight. Even more curiously, two messengers were

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ordered to proceed to Yezd to try and arrest the Aga. Not surprisingly, they were both quickly captured and the Aga ordered their hands to be cut off, though one was able to escape by pleading for forgiveness.

The Governor of Kerman did come out and fight the Aga. But his tactics were so poor — he divided his forces into three parts, allowing the Aga to pick off one part at a time — and, unknown to him, so many of his men were secret Ismailites who at the first opportunity deserted to the Aga, that he stood little chance. The Aga, flushed with success, now behaved even more as Governor of the Province and advanced towards Shahri-babek. The Governor here was Kohin Dil Khan who had fled Kandahar in 1839 and taken refuge here. A fierce Sunni, he had forbidden the Shias to utter the phrase that defined their sect, Ali is God's vicar. The battle this time acquired a sharp religious edge and the Aga Khan successfully expelled Kohin Dil Khan from Shahri-babek.

Southern Persia was filled with rebellions and Teheran with rumours about them. The rivals that Shah Muhammed had displaced had now joined the Aga — so one rumour went. These included a prince from Baghdad who was a disaffected uncle of the Shah and grandson of Fath Ali Shah, and various tribes in and around southern Persia; Mamasari and Bakhtiari, Shah Muhammed having killed the brother of the chief of the Bakhtiari tribe. All Persia seemed to be buzzing with rumours of British help for the rebellion of the Aga. The cooling of Anglo-Persian relations had meant a strengthening of ties between Persia and Russia and in April 1840 General Duhamel, the Russian Envoy in Persia, wrote to his government that the Aga Khan 'seems to be creating serious disturbances in the government of this distant province. It is claimed that the English emissaries, crossing through Persia, though not on a mission, were aware of this new rising of Bandits.'

The British and the Persians were now inching back towards a resumption of diplomatic relations but, in the negotiations that preceded them, the Persians often brought up the allegations of British help to the Aga, and Persian ministers in their diplomatic exchanges with the Russians mentioned this as a good example of British duplicity. When, a few months later, the Russian ambassador in Britain, Baron Brunnov, had raised the issue with Palmerston, the British Foreign Secretary with characteristic nonchalance dismissed the whole thing.

But for all the British protestations of innocence, the fact remains that the Aga's revolt and the confusion in southern Persia did help the British in Persia. A Dr Riach had been appointed to conduct negotiations with the Shah that would enable John McNeill to return as envoy to Teheran. The British wanted the Persians to agree to a number of demands, among them that Herat should be evacuated and the Persians should sign a commercial treaty. Dr Riach was surprised to see how readily the Persians seemed to accept British conditions and he felt that one of the reasons for this was the fact that the revolts of the Aga Khan had played a part in weakening the country. A weak Persia meant a more pliant one and one British official wrote with some satisfaction that the revolt of the Aga Khan would 'most

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likely lower the tone of Hajee Mirza Agasi, the Wuzeen, and render him more favourably inclined to meet the views of the British government.' Though the Persians continued to protest about the help the British were said to be giving the Aga, and even tried to enlist Russian sympathies, in the end their resistance to British demands crumbled. By the middle of 1841 they agreed to much of what the British wanted and in October 1841, John McNeill resumed his position as Envoy in Teheran.

By then the Aga, of course, had fled but McNeill felt it necessary to try and clear Britain's good name. The charges the Persians had brought, he insisted, were utterly without foundation; the British had never supported any rebellion in Persia, by the Aga Khan or anyone else.

The historical fine points may never be settled but with the British happy, there came the long-awaited Shah assault on the Aga. In June 1841, the commander of the artillery was sent from Teheran with orders to burn and destroy every village friendly to the Aga, while Khan Ali Khan, Governor of Lars, was asked actually to suppress the revolt. The first threat to the Aga though came from Habiullah Khan, the new Governor of Yezd. The Aga, watching his army march, decided quite wisely that discretion was the better part of valour and fled. (Watson, painting a characteristically darker picture, suggests that he abandoned his camp and his followers to his enemies, while seeking safety in the south.) In fact the Aga had gone to Baluchistan to obtain reinforcements and, returning in the night, surprised his enemy, inflicting a severe and serious loss on the Persian army.

But the subsequent arrival of the Shah's artillery with an accompanying force of 8,000 men was another thing and this time the Aga did decide to take refuge in flight. With a small body of men and a few horses he set out for the arid deserts in the east of Persia, travelling through Kerman and Yezd. Some time later he arrived in Khorasan where he had followers, and gathered together a small party. It was by now the summer of 1841. If the Aga is to be believed, then he once again tried to contact the British, this time Macnaghten, the British Minister in Kabul. The Aga would later write to Macnaghten that a year earlier he had laid much store in the hope that the British would arrive in Herat. But then Macnaghten had failed him and now in that hot summer of 1841 he had again been unable to get a response from the British. So, more in hope than in confident anticipation, he set off towards Kandahar and the sanctuary of the British.

Did the Aga Khan believe that the British would help him recover his lands and restore him as governor of Kerman? He certainly seems to have done so. As Rawlinson put it in his long memorandum on the Aga written in the winter of 1842, parts of which we have already quoted:

> He was not inclined easily to abandon his hopes of an empire in southern Persia — he conjectured that the determination evinced by the Shah to maintain his right of sovereignty over Herat might not only derange our plan of reconciliation with Persia but force us into actual hostility with her on the Afghan Frontier; he flattered himself that under such circumstances we should be only too glad to create a diversion by

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assisting him to reassert his own claims over Kerman — he accordingly ventured on a long perilous journey through central Persia.

Far from home, having lost his lands, his family away in Iraq, wandering down the inhospitable hills to British territory, the Aga must have looked and felt abandoned. The British were a good straw to cling to. After all, in many of these parts of Afghanistan, Baluchistan and the North-West Frontier Province, the British were still a sensation. In India the Raj may already have taken shape but in these frontier areas the British were still strange creatures from another world, credited with magic and mystery. They were the power that had dethroned the great Moghul empire, or as it was known in those parts, the House of Timur. If they could make and unmake kings in India, why not in Persia? It was perhaps not surprising that the Aga harboured such dreams, though it does indicate the limited feudal state of his mind, unable to perceive anything outside his interest. It would be many years before his family were to acquire the world-view that would make them (self-proclaimed) statesmen of the world.

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Even as Napier settled him in Sind in the summer of 1843, the Aga began to rekindle old dreams and plot against the Shah of Persia. An agent of his, Mirza Mahomad Ali, had arrived from Persia with news that many there resented and disliked the Shah's Government and this led him to write to the Governor General in May 1843, 'as I have the favour of the British Government I should hasten to release them from the oppressor.' He proposed going to Baluchistan but if this was not acceptable he asked for financial assistance to proceed to Baghdad and then Persia. He ended with a classic plea, 'make any terms with me as you please. Continually write to me and make use of my services.'

The Aga had proposed Baghdad because it was then part of the Ottoman empire. Many of Muhammed Shah's rivals had taken refuge there and the Aga saw opportunities of furthering the rift between the Sultan of Turkey and the Shah of Persia. But Ellenborough wouldn't hear of it. As he wrote to Napier: 'Our object is to prevent war between the Sultan and the Shah, and we cannot place at the Sultan's disposal an instrument which he could use with so much effect against the Shah. Aga Khan therefore must remain where he is.'

But if he were to remain in India what were to be the financial arrangements? As we have seen, Napier in November 1843 had written to Lord Ellenborough about the Aga's immense income and his God-like status. This estimate was provided just as the Aga, the very same month, was once again renewing his demands for money. In a letter to Ellenborough he wrote: 'I have received nothing from the Government for the year I have been in Sind nor before leaving Kandahar, the treasury there being empty. God knows I should have felt shame to have asked for stipends from the British Government. I trust that your Lordship will make some arrangement in my favour which will raise my character in the world.'

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For the Aga this rankled. It was a time of intrigue, a time of conquest; the British subsidized many chiefs and footling princes. The Aga had rendered 'great services', 'the whole world' knew he was a friend of the British. What did he have to show for it?

> I am told that the descendants of any who render even trifling service to the British Government enjoy honour and rewards from generation to generation, and as your Lordship's rank and liberality are many, so are we also of no mean name. Kohnonil Khan of Kandahar and Shamsooden Khan of Herat who fled each from his native country and took refuge under the Government of Mohamad Shah had a perpetual assignment made them of Rs 30,000 per annum partly payable in cash, partly to be derived from the proceeds of a jaghire. Now I trust your Lordships will bear in mind that the British Government is in no way inferior to that of Mahomed Shah. Neither am I a person of less consequence than Kohnonil Khan and Shamsooden Khan.

The Aga always claimed that the British in Kandahar had granted him property that yielded Rs 40,000 a year; what he now wanted was to be established as a landed aristocrat in British Sind. Ellenborough was not against paying the Aga, but in trying to decide what allowance to give to the Persian, the British had to estimate his religious income. Napier estimated that he received more than Rs 20,000 a year from his followers and, on the basis of what he knew Rawlinson had paid him in Kandahar, he thought a pension of Rs 1,000 a month ought to be enough for the Khan, his followers and his servants. Napier knew that the Aga Khan would not be satisfied with that amount. He wanted a pension of Rs 11,000 a month and warned Ellenborough that 'unless he is satisfied with whatever your Lordship may think proper to allow him, he will go away.'

Ellenborough agreed to Rs 1,000 but asked Napier to make sure that the Aga and his men were disarmed. When Napier wondered whether he should imprison the Aga, Ellenborough hoped it would not be necessary and that the Religious Chief would be happy with his Government pension. In January 1844, Ellenborough sanctioned a pension of Rs 1,000 a month.

All this, however, had soured relations between Napier and the Aga who had taken to writing rude letters to Napier. Napier, somewhat tongue in cheek, pretended that he was mortified by the Aga's accusations:

> You say I never agree to what you suggest! How can you, who are so good and brave a soldier, be ignorant that I am not master but a servant? What you suggest I tell to my master the Governor General. What he orders I tell to you. Why do you tell me I do not mind your suggestions? You are a wise Persian politician; I am a plain English soldier. I tell you truth like a simple man and you, being a politician, will not believe me! This is very unwise in you, because you want to know the truth, and yet when you hear it will not believe, and tell me I never agree to what you suggest! Have your own way, and I will have mine.

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Napier kept the Aga under close watch, disarmed his men and got him to live in Hyderabad instead of Jherruk — it made supervision easier — with the promise he would get him a house there. For the British the Aga Khan problem seemed to have been settled. But they had bargained without their man.

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Chapter 4

God the Intriguer

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Ellenborough may have hoped that the British Government pension together with the generous subscriptions paid by his followers would convert the first Aga into a good British-style man of property and affluence. But the transition from a feudal Lord who could own and have everything he desired to a good British pensioner was not so easily achieved. And while life in Sind was undoubtedly comfortable if not luxurious for the Aga — he would estimate later that his monthly expenses amounted to Rs 20,000 — Kerman and the glory he had lost haunted him.

We may picture the scene. The Aga in his estates in Hyderabad, living amidst a native population in Sind that did not exactly love him (memories of the Aga's alliance with the British against the Amirs would remain fresh in Sind until well into the twentieth century), fawned on by his Indian followers and encouraged by his Persian courtiers to believe that he could return to Kerman in glory. A born intriguer like the first Aga Khan could hardly have wished for more favourable ingredients to fuel his restless plans.

So far we have seen the Aga the rebel, now for the next seven years between 1844 and 1851 — when his position in India was finally settled — Aga, the intriguer, would hold sway. Sind was an ideal base camp for such intrigues. It bordered Baluchistan, parts of which belonged to Persia — known as Persian Baluchistan — and this in turn bordered Kerman. In a mirror image of the journey the Aga had himself made four years earlier to join Rawlinson in Kandahar, his couriers now journeyed back to Kerman carrying letters encouraging rebellion and, as the Persians later discovered, guns with which to support one. The letters, all written in Persian, had the circumlocution and verbosity of arch-oriental literature but, for the Persian government, they had one simple meaning. The Aga had adopted the style of writing which in the Persian language was reserved exclusively for royalty and he was calling on his supporters to rebel, offering riches for their success and invoking great and merciless retribution on his enemies. In one such letter he hoped, with the grace of God, 'to slay in retaliation great and small.' The letters cunningly hinted that the British in India were helping the Aga, and did nothing to smooth the fragile, but recovering, Anglo-Persian relations.

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The Persians demanded that the British 'either seize and deliver him over to the Persian government, or stop protecting him and expel him from its dominion so that he may not reside in our vicinity and that his turbulence and wickedness with reference to the frontiers of the Persian Government may be checked.' Legally the Persians could ask for the Aga to be handed back, under the terms of the Treaty of 1814 between Britain and Persia. But this demand, and the subsequent Persian ones over the next seven years, opened up a three-cornered British debate — between the British diplomats in Teheran who very often persuaded the Foreign Office in London that it was more important to please the Persian Government rather than the Aga Khan, the Board of Control for India in London (the pre-1857 term for India Office) and the British authorities in India who were not quite so sure. Eventually a compromise was worked out and it was suggested to the Persians that they might be satisfied if the Aga were removed from the neighbourhood of Persia and made to live in Calcutta, Bengal — the seat of British power.

But though this decision seems to have been arrived at some time in November/December of 1844, the Aga did not actually leave Sind until October 1845 and he did not arrive in Bengal until July 1847. The intervening period was taken up by the British in India dealing with the various claims, petitions, statements, etc made by the Aga, while Lieutenant Shiel, the British envoy in Teheran, tried to pacify an increasingly bemused and angry Persian Government. Much of the delay was due to the skill of the Aga, who showed himself to be a brilliant procrastinator. But some of it was due to the way the British in India handled the Aga; it took them almost three years — until the summer of 1847 — to admit to the Aga that he had been moved to Bengal as a result of a compromise between the British and the Persian Governments.

The Aga's initial response to the British attempt to move him from Sind was to plead poverty. He seems to have learned about his proposed expulsion from his agents in Persia, proving perhaps the excellence of his courier service, and on 18th January 1845, he told the British Government that if he were to leave Sind 'I shall not be able to procure the means of livelihood.' Under such circumstances the Government ought not to cast a stain on his character and to 'leave me without bread — who has descended from a family of 900 years standing. If I am permitted to remain in Sind I shall be able to earn my livelihood.' Perhaps, he suggested, the Government would allow him to go to the neighbouring state of Kutch — ruled by a native Indian prince but under overall British control — or to the country of Nassier Khan, one of the Baluchi chiefs with whom the Aga had been in touch. And while the British pondered this, the Aga set in train a series of moves to confuse the Persians. His agents in Kerman spread the news that the Aga had actually died. Almost immediately his brother Muhammed Bakir Khan launched an attack on Bemfeylee, a Persian stronghold on the borders of Kerman. He was forced to flee back to Baluchistan but the Persians captured guns which turned out to be British made. In a letter written to Rawlinson in May 1845, the Aga would accept that his brother

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had been up to mischief in Kerman, but he still managed to stay on in Sind. Eventually he was persuaded to leave Sind on 7th October 1845 — and the lever was a simple economic one. The British government threatened to stop the Aga's pension until he went to Bengal.

But the Aga's bag of delaying tricks still had a few more riches to offer. Napier was still Governor of Sind and the Aga persuaded Napier to allow him to go to Kutch where a great many of his disciples lived and could provide him with the life style to which he was accustomed. In the winter of 1845, the Aga finally began his journey to Bombay, proceeding leisurely along the west coast of India from Kutch, through Mungirie, Surat, finally to enter the city of Bombay. Calcutta was still 1,200 miles away on the other — eastern — coast and the Aga had some further thoughts about how not to get there.

In his various letters he repeated the point about the loss of income he would suffer if he went to Calcutta. He had explained in his letter to the Governor General on 12th July 1845 he was a religious leader with followings in various places — Turkish Arabia, Baluchistan, Sind, Kutch and parts of Northern and Western India. 'As I am entitled to receive according to the obligation of the Sect a certain tribute from all its members and that in order to supervise these affairs it is absolutely necessary that I should reside in some of the places above named.' Soon after his arrival in Bombay he added a novel twist. On 27th December 1845 he wrote to the Governor of Bombay informing him that he had received letters from the Shah of Persia and his ministers requesting him to return to that country and promising to restore his property to him. As an inducement he suggested to the British that he would be quite happy to follow their wishes if only they would allow him to return to Sind for two or three months. He had left behind landed estates, cash and other property to the amount of Rs 800,000 and it was now necessary to look after them since the brother and servant whom he had placed in charge had left India; and if he did not make these arrangements he would lose all his property.

The letters had that mixture of supplication, a touch of the aggrieved, 'I have been overlooked', and oily applications of flattery. 'I am confident that the services I have rendered to the British Government will not go for nothing. When the little services of many persons have not been allowed to pass unrewarded by the British Government, the services which I have rendered which are known to the world and of which I have powerful proof in the letters addressed to me by British officers, will certainly not go for nothing.'

What the British in India made of these claims is not known but for the British in Teheran they must have appeared ridiculous. Shiel had to face increasingly bitter Persian protests and the Persian Ministry of Foreign Affairs suggested to Shiel, not very subtly, that since his protests did not seem to be working, maybe the Persians ought to take the matter up directly with the British Foreign Secretary, the Earl of Aberdeen. Persian bodyguards intercepted messages between the Aga and his agents and Shiel wondered if the Aga had actually moved from Sind. In the middle of 1847

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the authorities in Kerman had fought off yet another attack from one of the Aga's brothers, armed and financed by the Aga, or so the Persians alleged. Soon after, at a meeting with the Shah, Shiel was informed that the Persians had actually captured one of the Aga's brothers. Among his papers had been found several letters from the Aga in Bombay, one of which enjoined his brother to prosecute the insurrection with vigour, and at the same time to amuse the Shah with a present of elephants and other Indian animals. Earlier, in November 1846, Shiel had written to Palmerston, who had succeeded Aberdeen as Foreign Secretary, arguing that the continued presence of the Aga in Bombay was harming relations between Persia and Britain.

It is not exactly clear how the Aga managed to linger in Bombay for so long. There was no Rawlinson to act as his PR, no Napier who might want help in subduing the Amirs of Sind. But it seems that the Aga had managed to establish a rapport with a Mr Escomb, Secretary to the Persian Department of the Governor of Bombay. Personal charm allied to a certain inimitable feudal air seemed to have won him friends in Bombay officialdom who did not appear to be keen to hustle him to Bengal. But he could not for ever hold off the pressure being mounted by Shiel, who no doubt upset by the failure of the British to do what must have appeared a very simple thing, wrote a conciliatory letter to the Persian ministers suggesting that the British in Bombay were 'ignorant of the deceit and fraud' which 'composed the character of' the Aga Khan.

The Aga now accepted that he would have to go to Calcutta. But he still had one last card to play: it was the old one of money. After listing the losses he had suffered — estates in Persia, losses serving the British, the steady whittling down of the pension etc — he suggested to the British Government that the only way he could move to Calcutta was if they would defray his expenses which amounted to Rs 5,000 a month; without financial assistance he could not possibly go to Calcutta. Even if the British wanted him to return to Persia he still wanted money; he could not possibly return to Persia either without the Government paying off his creditors in Bombay or agreeing to continue his pension in Persia.

The British must have admired the Aga's cheek. There was, of course, no question of the powers of the Government of India extending beyond India and paying the Aga his pension in Persia or some other part of the world. But this letter seemed to have made the British realize that they could use the economic lever to force the Aga to go to Calcutta. The Aga had been living in Bombay for almost eighteen months, and for a year — since March 1846 — the Government had withheld his pension until he went to Calcutta. Now, after this latest begging letter, the Government offered to pay him the arrears of his pension provided he immediately undertook to proceed to Calcutta.

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In April 1947 a sum of Rs 14,000 — his arrears of pension — was paid to the Aga, and on the 19th of the same month the Aga with about forty of his

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followers, left for Calcutta via Indore. The Government, aware of the Aga's delaying skills, issued instructions to his agents to make sure that once the Aga had visited Indore he would proceed *directly* to Calcutta. (The word 'directly' was underlined in the Government order.)

The great British invention of the railways had not yet come to India and the journey from Bombay to Indore was overland. The Aga and his men suffered terribly; three died on the way to Indore, seven arrived at Indore with severe fever and two died there. The Aga himself had to undergo an eye operation at Indore but this was perfectly successful.

Less so was finding a way of getting the Aga directly from Indore to Calcutta. The British had learned some lessons from the Aga's prevarications over the last few years and wanted to take no chances on the way. They feared that he might find a convenient staging post and convert it into a permanent place of residence. The old leisurely route to Calcutta would have taken the Aga through Bhopal, and Oudh, territories that had once been ruled by Indian princes and where there were various degrees of dissatisfaction with British rule. An intriguer like the Aga might find the temptations too great and, much to his annoyance, the British decided to send him directly by the new road that had been opened to Agra and from there by boat to Calcutta. This sudden British urgency, however, only led to another Aga complaint. At Agra, the Aga was forced to abandon his horse and carriage and was put on a country boat from Etaba to Allahabad and then travelled by steamer to Calcutta. Not all the Aga's men or horses could be transported in this way and the rest of his attendants had to march down to Calcutta in the more conventional fashion.

So the Aga arrived in Calcutta in July 1847 without a carriage of his own and was almost immediately involved in an altercation with the authorities. The British did provide him with carriage and horses — initially free of cost — but when the Aga learned that he would have to pay for them eventually, he immediately returned them to the stables, arguing that as he had been forced to leave his in Agra, the Government should provide a substitute without cost to him until his own arrived.

Accommodation, too, was a problem. The Government had selected a house for him in Dumdum (where the city's airport is now) at a cost of Rs 80 per month and it proposed to deduct this from his stipend; the Aga argued that since he had arrived in Calcutta at the Government's request he should be given a rent allowance. To the Aga this was not an unreasonable request since the Bombay Government were providing something very similar to his brother and family who had travelled down to the city with him from Sind the previous year. But perhaps the biggest grouse was that in Calcutta he was, for the first time in his life, cut off from his normal followers. In Calcutta there were no followers to fan his belief in his own God-like status — or British officers like Rawlinson or Napier to flatter him into thinking that he would be useful to the British. Here, at the very centre of the British Empire in India, the Aga was just another native chief. The British, through their conquests of the Indian subcontinent, had gathered many such chiefs. The Aga, himself, had been put in the charge of

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a Lieutenant Cavanagh, whose title was 'Superintendent of the Mysore Princes and ex-Amirs of Sind.' Cavanagh had been told to treat the Aga with the utmost courtesy and consideration, but still the Aga remained just another native supplicant who had come to the Eastern capital of the most powerful Empire on earth. This became abundantly clear to the Aga when he met Cavanagh in September 1847.

The ex-Indian chief petitioning for more money and creature comforts was a familiar enough figure to Cavanagh but the Aga, characteristically, presented a different picture. As we have seen, the British never really told him why they had brought him to Calcutta and he immediately built on this lack of information a neat little parcel of fantasy. He showed Cavanagh a Persian publication called *Mujima ool Akhbar* which had suggested that the real reason why the British had moved the Aga to Calcutta was to use his political influence to counteract Russian designs in central Asia for which he would receive a stipend of Rs 3,000 per month. When Cavanagh lightly brushed aside the Aga's less than subtle hint by remarking that 'no sensible person ever placed much confidence in newspaper reports,' the Aga offered to help in subduing the marauding tribes on the North-Western frontiers separating India from Afghanistan and Persia. He still had powerful friends among those tribes and he was sure he could render Britain and Persia much benefit by influencing them. When Cavanagh again declined the offer, the Aga wondered why the British had brought him to Calcutta. If the British really had such a good relationship with the Persians then shouldn't they be able to act as mediator and enable the Aga to return to Kerman?

Cavanagh knew perfectly well why the Aga was in Calcutta, but it was not within his brief to divulge the reason, although by the end of the interview he felt that he had probably penetrated the castle of the Aga's fantasy with a few shots of reality:

> From the result of my interview I am of the opinion that the Aga Khan is considerably abated in his pretensions with the last few days, and although some of his ideas may be still rather extravagant, he has now formed a more correct opinion relative to his position with regard to the Government of India than he entertained on his arrival at the station.

But as Cavanagh had shrewdly surmised, the clue to the Aga's behaviour lay in the fact that 'the adulation which he experienced in Bombay and Sind [from his followers] had impressed him with a much greater view of his own importance.' This contradiction between what he thought he was worth, and what the British thought he was worth, would lead to a niggling, nasty stay in Calcutta, punctuated by a stream of letters from the Aga alternately smarting at the alleged injustices and pleading for proper recognition of his status.

By March 1848, the Aga was writing to the Government that he was destitute, and that his family in Kerbala, in Iraq, was suffering great distress. Lack of followers in Calcutta meant that his regular income had dried up and he pleaded with the Government to take 'some measures' that would 'afford me and my family the means of support.'

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Insult was then added to injury when Sir Herbert Maddock, Secretary to the Government of India, finally came clean about why the Aga was in Calcutta. It was not because the British wanted him in any special intermediary role, but because that was the compromise achieved with the Shah of Persia.

The Aga felt betrayed. He complained bitterly that he had only left Bombay on the promises of 'the highest honour and respect.' He felt sure that his call to Calcutta meant the British were going to help him regain his lands in Persia. Now all this had turned to dust, and the Aga requested that he be allowed to return to Karachi in Sind or Kerbala in Iraq.

The British turned down the request and the Aga, unhappy and lost in Calcutta, responded with the only weapon he had: petulance. He stopped paying the rent of Rs 240 a month due to the Calcutta estate agents Messrs Colvin, Ainsell, Currie and Co. But this only prompted the British to start deducting the rent from his stipend. The Aga, undeterred, made an application for an increase in the stipend, which the British refused. There followed another letter from the Aga with the familiar reiterations of hardships suffered and services rendered to the British, coupled with his intention to travel to Egypt. All he wanted from the Government now, he said, was a steamer to be placed at his disposal and enough money so that he could meet his travelling expenses. In Egypt he hoped to be a contented happy pensioner surrounded by his devoted followers.

But as the Government soon discovered, this was not all that the Aga wanted. There was the little matter of the house and garden he had constructed at Karachi at the 'desire', as he later alleged, of Sir Charles Napier, costing over Rs 22,000. Would the Government buy this estate and pay off the Aga's creditors? There were losses he had suffered in Kutch, Bhooj and Sind, amounting to several hundreds of thousands of rupees. Surely, he argued before he left for Egypt, the Government ought to make good these losses since they were suffered during the course of his 'services' to the British? But the real sting came almost in an aside. On the morning of 8th May 1848, the Aga met Cavanagh to explain his decision to go to Egypt. At the very end of the conversation he suggested that he would like to travel overland to Bombay — via Agra — where he would catch the boat for Egypt, and he hoped the Government would allow him to remain in Bombay to collect other members of his family and make 'satisfactory arrangements to appease my creditors.'

Cavanagh and the others quickly sensed that Egypt was a smoke screen to be used to get away from Calcutta: in reality, the Aga wanted to get back to Bombay. He would linger in Northern India intriguing his way through states rich in possibilities, and once in Bombay use it as a base for his old destabilization plans in southern Persia. The British in Calcutta were now pretty confident that they had summed up their man — and they did not like the conclusions they drew. As Sir Herbert Maddock, Secretary to the Government of India, put it in a letter to Cavanagh on 6th May 1848:

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> The Aga is a person of the most restless and intriguing temperament and I am convinced that he will never be satisfied with the position he occupies in this country which he considers far inferior to his desserts. And instead of showing gratitude for the kindness he has experienced from the British, he evidently imagines that with special references to his rank and services he has been unjustly treated by not being permitted to reside in the vicinity of his disciples on the western coast of India.

Cavanagh was told to tell the Aga that 'he cannot be allowed to go to Bombay for any purpose whatsoever.' The Aga responded with another of his letters, this time to Lord Dalhousie, Governor-General of India. It was another of his classic letters, playing the part of the wronged friend to the full:

> Although I frequently represent my grievances I never meet with a favourable reply.... I have ascertained from verbal and written communications from the Residents of Kutch, Bhooj and other places [that], it is now rumoured that I am a prisoner.... The justice of this Government is so great that even prisoners ... enjoy more happiness than in their own native land. I, however, am a friend to the British and therefore additional liberty should be shown towards me ... otherwise it is impossible that I am to continue to reside here.

The Aga may have exaggerated, in his characteristic fashion, his status as 'prisoner' though, no doubt, he deeply resented his ambiguous position in Calcutta. His claim to divinity depended for support on the proximity of his followers, who likewise offered proof of his absolute power and total infallibility. Twelve hundred miles away in Calcutta, rumoured to be a prisoner of the British, the followers in Western India must soon begin to acquire doubts: enemies could take advantage of this and seduce them away. And without followers constantly sustaining his God-like ego, giving their offerings and their homage, he felt reduced to the level of a mere mortal. Disease had also taken its toll and while he was in Calcutta he lost so many of his horses that by the end of his stay his stud was not worth much more than Rs 1,500. Socially, he had made little or no mark on the Calcutta scene which, befitting its status as the capital city of British India, was considered second only to London. The Aga would often try to sting the British by invoking in his conversations and communications the generosity with which Persian refugees were treated by the Russians. Were the British in any way inferior to the Russians that they should treat their refugees in so niggardly a way?

But if the Aga hoped to arouse British pride, he failed. The British even turned down his request to be allowed to go to Bombay for just forty days and bluntly told him that he 'should come to a decision at once' either to 'proceed to Egypt or stay in this country.' The Aga continued to propose various plans to get him out of Calcutta: when he heard that Dalhousie was going to the Punjab he offered to accompany him and, as in Bombay a

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couple of years ago, he once again produced letters from the Shah and his ministers saying they had no objection to the return of the Aga. But nothing seemed to work. Then suddenly his fortunes turned.

In September 1848, the Aga's great enemy Muhammed Shah died. Though only forty, he had long lived a life of indulgence and finally fell victim to gout and a whole host of maladies. For the Aga there couldn't have been a greater release. On 5th December 1848 the Aga visited Cavanagh and informed him that he wanted to leave 'Bengal by the first opportunity in order to revisit his native country.' The next day the Governor General's Council met in Calcutta and noted:

> The death of the King of Persia has apparently removed all objections that may have prevented his return to his native country in an earlier period when he seemed to look with distrust on the offers that were made to him if he would return.

Conveniently, there was a ship leaving Calcutta, the SS *Bentinck*, in forty-eight hours and some of the British officials were keen to have the Aga travel on that. But as so often with the Aga there were problems with money. The passage of the Aga and his family would cost about Rs 8,000. He had contracted debts of between Rs 4,000 and Rs 5,000. All this the Government would have to meet. This would, of course, be set against the fact that once the Aga left the country he would no longer have to be paid a pension of Rs 1,000 a month and all in all the Governor General's Council minuted that: 'It is on many accounts very reasonable that we should be relieved here of the person of a high rank in his own country, holding so doubtful and embarrassing a position as he has done here.'

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Eventually the Aga travelled on a P & O steamer called *Lady Mary Wood*. He travelled in some style: two cabins were booked for the Aga, one especially for him; there were berths provided for thirty servants and the Government eventually calculated that removing the Aga from Calcutta cost them Rs 16,530. But this, it was reckoned, was a small price to pay for a man whose constant whingeing had proved a great nuisance.

The British in Calcutta had been so keen to get rid of the Aga that they hadn't even informed the Government of Bombay in time. Comically, Bombay learnt that the Aga was arriving when Mahummad Bakur Hossanee, the Aga's brother there, requested the Government to provide 'additional accommodation for himself and his numerous attendants' since the rent allowance that the Government gave Bakur was insufficient to maintain the Aga. He also wanted the Government to issue instructions to the Customs authorities to allow the Aga's baggage through. The Governor of Bombay, not having heard anything from Calcutta, was convinced that the Aga had left Bengal without Government permission and instructed the Bombay police to place the Aga under surveillance the moment he arrived. In the end, Bombay heard from Calcutta and made suitable arrangements.

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Like Calcutta, they supposed the Aga was to spend only a few days in the city before leaving for Persia: and provided for a horse and carriage out of an allowance of Rs 50 per month.

Little did Bombay realize how permanent this makeshift arrangement would turn out to be. Calcutta may have been cold and unsympathetic, but in Bombay, surrounded by his followers, the Aga was in his true element. Soon the Government of Bombay, the Government of India in Calcutta, the British in Teheran and the Board of Control for India and the Foreign Office in London, were to be embroiled in a series of moves and counter moves — one often cancelling out the other — to solve the problem of the Aga.

Only the Aga knew what he was doing and in the end he quite easily outwitted them all. He arrived back in Bombay on 26th December 1848 and found that the British had mapped out the route of his return journey to Persia. This was very much the route that had been kicking around for some years: one where the Persian Government would allow the Aga to return to Persia, provided he did not go anywhere near Baluchistan or Kerman. On his journey out to Calcutta from Bombay the previous year the Aga had been told by the British that he could return to Persia by that route but he had declined the offer. The British in Calcutta had no reason to believe that the Persian Government's conditions had changed, and they were so keen to get the Aga out of Calcutta that they had not previously checked with the Persian Government as to whether the conditions still stood. It was only after the Aga was safely on the SS *Lady Mary Wood* and well away from the coast of Bengal that Lieutenant Shiel in Teheran was asked to make an application to the Persian Government to permit the Aga's return to his country.

On 23rd February 1849 Shiel reported back from Teheran that the Persian Government's conditions on the Aga's return remained unchanged. Shiel had doubted whether the Aga was really keen to return — and he was soon to be proved right. One of the masterly tactics in the Aga's delay and procrastination armoury was to offer the more intricate 'all right but ...' to the more straightforward 'no'. So now he requested the British to provide him with a vessel in which to travel to Persia, and followed this up with a seemingly even more innocuous request to be allowed to stay for fifteen or twenty days at Muscat. Both requests raised very difficult problems. Muscat was a troubled area where the Aga had followers, the Aga returning to Persia in a British Government vessel could well confirm all the old Persian fears of British connivance at the Aga's adventures. For almost four months the various British officials earnestly debated the implications until, on 17th March 1849, Dalhousie told the Bombay Government that the Aga may be 'peremptorily directed to proceed to Persia by the route prescribed by the Government of India.' The Aga, it was decided, was not 'entitled to the distinction of being sent in a Government vessel' and if he did not leave India early then his pension would be stopped. Bombay was told that he must make immediate arrangements for his departure.

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In Bombay, in March 1849, everything did seem to be ready to get the

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Aga to leave for Basra on the steamer *Sir Charles Forbes*. Sumptuous arrangements they were too, with the saloon of the steamer divided by a partition, so that the Aga could have his harem, and with deck space for more than forty of his servants. The Bombay Government was prepared to meet the cost of the passage — Rs 3,500 — and provide an allowance of over two months' pension — Rs 3,000 — for the Aga's expenses on the journey. (The Aga wanted more but the Government saw this as a reasonable compromise.) It was just as important that the Aga catch the steamer *Sir Charles Forbes* since, with the monsoon about to break in Western India, the sailing season would soon end. And once again the British in India used the pension lever to try and force the Aga out. On 26th April 1849, the Secretary of the Government of India had informed the Aga that if he did not take the passage the pension would be discontinued and, in any case, no pension could be paid to him outside India. A couple of weeks later the Government of Bombay passed a resolution instructing that if the Aga did not sail on 10th May his pension would be stopped.

But the Aga had no intention of travelling on the *Sir Charles Forbes*. He responded with a long letter to Dalhousie that began with a plea for justice and ended with a plea for money. Dalhousie was unmoved and the Aga's pension was stopped. But this time the economic lever did not quite work. The Aga, surrounded by his devoted followers, could do without the British pension, at least temporarily. What he wanted was time. He had now spun out his stay in Bombay, meant for a few days, to seven months, almost as if he expected something to break. Sure enough something did.

In September 1849, Captain Farrant, a British official in Teheran, reported to Palmerston that the Persian authorities would like the British to detain the Aga for the present in India. The result of this 'detention' request was that, quite ironically, the Aga's pension was resumed — and he took the first steps towards acquiring his cherished political asylum. The British had believed the Persians would have the Aga back and had stopped his pension because of his procrastination. Now that the Persians wanted the Aga to be detained in India, the British felt they owed it to him to pay his pension.

Absurd as it may seem, this was very often the logic that the British were to apply with respect to the Aga. The Aga had added a further twist to this by actually petitioning for an increase in the pension from Rs 1,000 to Rs 3,000. The British declined the increase but did resume the original pension. Almost as soon as he had received his first month's pension, the Aga resumed his cat and mouse games with the Government. He suggested that perhaps he ought to go back to Persia and the Persian Government would quite like to see him back there. This 'will he, won't he return' game might have continued for a long time but for Palmerston. Although he did not quite mean to do it, it was his insistence that, in a very curious way, granted the Aga asylum in India.

Palmerston, as we have seen, had never been happy about having the Aga as a refugee in India and in November 1849 he once again asked Shiel to enquire in Teheran 'whether there is any longer sufficiently valid reason for

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keeping that person out of Persia.' On 7th February 1850, Shiel replied that he had met Ameer-i-Nazam and the Persian minister had 'replied that it would be highly embarrassing if this notorious traitor should return to this country ... this person has levied war against the Shah and that after being driven out of Persia he had on various occasions endeavoured to incite insurrection in Kerman by issuing inflammatory documents.'

The Persians were, in effect, asking the British to hold the Aga indefinitely in India and this created problems for Palmerston. There was the question of who should pay the Aga's pension? It was now coming out of the revenues of British India. But if the Aga was being held in India as a result of a political deal between Persia and British, then the expenditure should really be met by the British Government in London. This is what the British in India thought, supported by Hobhouse in London, though it did not find an echo with Palmerston. He told Shiel to tell the Persian Government that while they could not give up the Aga as a fugitive, they would no longer prohibit him from leaving India. 'If he has committed in Persia crimes against the state, then Persia has only to arrest him and bring him to trial when he re-enters Persia.' He complained that they were expected to act as a policeman for the Aga and pay for the privilege.

In a letter to Hobhouse, written on 2nd May 1850, Palmerston asked him to tell the Indian Government that the Aga ought to be warned of the risk he took if he decided to go to Persia under his own steam — in that case the British could do nothing to save him from the wrath of the Persians. And it was in the final paragraph of that letter that he went on to make a case for the permanent asylum of the Aga in India:

> If such a prospect before Agha Khan Mehalatee depends on remaining in British India, it appears to me that he should not be permitted to reside in any such place from which he can conveniently keep up communications with any partisans whom he may still have in Persia and in that manner encourage disturbances in the dominion of the Shah.

Though Palmerston's letter arrived in Bombay in July, via Hobhouse, the authorities were in no hurry to deal with the Aga. The monsoon meant sea travel to Persia was impossible and it was only in September, after Calcutta had been consulted, that Bombay tackled the Aga. In September 1850, Mr Erskine, a Deputy Secretary of the Government of Bombay, met the Aga and informed him of Palmerston's letter. The Aga was as good as gold, he did not wish to return to Persia and he promised to have no more secret letters ferried back and forth between Bombay and Southern Persia. As further proof of his goodness he told Erskine that his brother and attendants who had been living in the Persian Gulf would shortly be returning to Bombay to join him.

The Aga had almost attained the status he desired: political asylum in India. Only one question remained, would he have to go back to Calcutta? On 17th April 1851 the Court of Directors of the East India Company resolved

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not to require the Aga to return to Bengal unless the Persian Government on being further consulted should renew its objections to his residing in Bombay and unless he should engage in any intrigues or conspiracies and he has been distinctly apprized that on these two conditions will depend his being permitted to remain in Bombay.

On 18th April 1851 the Aga sat down to write another letter, this time to Viscount Falkland, Governor of Bombay:

> About nine months ago my friend Mr Erskine also verbally communicated to me the same instructions [the Palmerston ones] and in reply I told him that I never intended to be wanting in my duty towards the Persian State; that the cause of my having been blamed before was the hot disposition of Hajee Mirza Agasee who had obliged me to leave the Persian Court; that by the blessing of God all the people of Persia are happy during the reign of the present King and the administration of the present minister; and that with the exception of praying for the perpetual existence of the Persian State, I would not do any other thing which might lead to intrigues or conspiracies. Mr Erskine then said that I should have no correspondence with Persia and I agreed to do so. About two months ago I received three letters from the Ameer Kurbeer, another from Elmadord Dowlah, and the third from the Agudan Bashee but I did not reply to them in consequence of my agreement with Mr Erskine. I beg Government to rest satisfied that I will not violate the agreement.

It was a far cry from the wild, fantastic letter he had written to William Macnaghten back in the summer of 1841. Gone was the proud, confident boast that he would conquer all of Persia for the British without any loss. Gone was the call to arms and blood. This was the voice of the petitioner, the man who hoped with words to find favour and money. The great rebel had become the great petitioner — confident that the longer the plea the more likely the chances of receiving favours.

The British may not have used him to throw Southern Persia into confusion, as Rawlinson had envisaged, but they had, partly by muddle, partly by design, acquired a Muslim instrument. It would be many years before the British themselves realized how useful the instrument might be — but as the British Empire faced its most critical century it found that it had to hand an ancient weapon with which to beat its modern enemies. The man who was God was firmly established as a good British pensioner. The Khan family would undergo many transformations over the years but this, the first, was by far the most remarkable.

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Chapter 5

'The Mischievous Imposter'

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The Bombay that the first Aga Khan had settled in was a city worth hankering for. It was 'the city of gold', the place early British settlers had known as 'the great Indian lottery'. If you survived, you made a lot of money — if not, you ended up at Sonapur, the city's crematorium. The British had eyed the place ever since the East India Company was formed in 1599, and its acquisition in 1662 — part of a Portuguese dowry for Charles II's marriage to the Portuguese Princess Catherine of Braganza — had started a regular flow of Britons staking a claim to fortunes. By the time the Aga arrived, 'the city of gold' was healthier and had acquired all the characteristics of a free-trade city, as its founding father Gerald Aungier had hoped it would, almost 200 years before.

It was a city almost one tenth of the size of the present city, and still awaiting the great reclamation works that were to give it its present size and make it the first city of India; its streets were thronged with traders — from all over the world — seeking a market for their varied goods. There were Arabs, Persians, Indians of various castes and tribes, Jews, the rapidly westernizing Parsees (the original inhabitants of pre-Muslim Persia) and Ismailis, the latter being the city's itinerant peddlers. They used to buy vast quantities of goods at auction and travel from one British home to another with everything from anchovy sauce to Wiltshire cheese. Lady Falkland, wife of the Governor of Bombay to whom the Aga had made his pledges of good conduct, would call her book on the city *Chow-Chow*, the name used to describe the Ismailis' mixed oddment bag. But just as the Aga was fighting to stay in Bombay, the Ismaili merchants were losing their trading position. In the days before the advent of the vast P & O steamers, when English ladies were rare and Paris fashions a dream, the Ismaili merchants had ruled Bombay styles. In the Bombay of the 1850s London was no longer so distant and the Ismaili merchants found that their taste in fashions was 'laughed at' and their self-importance shaken. From indispensable providers of luxuries in a hard land, they had suddenly become figures of fun to the British. In fact, though they were Ismailis they were not the Aga Khan's followers. They were Bohras — another Ismaili sect.

The present Aga Khan, like his predecessors, is said to be the leader of a twenty-million strong Ismaili community, but the number is doubtful and

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the description misleading in that there is not one Ismaili sect, but several. As we have seen, Ismailis started as a sect within Islam — divided from their fellow Muslims by belief, or disbelief, in the divinity of the Imam. But just as the wider Shia community of which they were part had split, the Ismailis themselves split — and split again. They all followed a familiar pattern: an Imam would die and be succeeded either by his son or by some other successor. One group would claim the successor was an imposter and, as the dead Imam was the last of the divine Imams, his true successor was 'hidden' from the world, and would only emerge on the Day of Judgement to settle all accounts. The others would acclaim his traditional successor as the rightful revealed Imam and so it would go on until the next succession crisis.

By the time of the Crusades, the Ismailis had split into two broad sects: the Mustalian Ismailis and the Nizari Ismailis, the names deriving from the different Imams whom the followers accepted as genuine. In India, the Bohras were the Mustalian Ismailis, while the Aga Khan's followers were the descendants of the Nizari Ismailis, known as 'Khojas'. There had been, and there would be, many more splits and many more Ismaili sects, but it is worth stressing that the Aga Khan is not the leader of the Ismailis — but the leader of a sect within the Ismailis called the Khojas.

If this history is complicated enough, then the story of the Khojas is even more fantastic. They have little direct racial or geographical connection with either the Fatimad Ismailis or the Nizaris. Almost four centuries after the splits they were in fact Hindus, plying their trade in the provinces of Sind. Although Sind had fallen to Islam in the ninth century, many Hindus lived there and it was only in 1430 that they were converted to Islam and Ismailism by one of the most influential of the Nizari missionaries, Sadr al Din.

By all accounts a clever man, he understood well the techniques of subtle persuasion. He took a Hindu name, Sahadev, and like the early Christian missionaries in pagan Europe, quickly and cleverly adapted Hindu beliefs in order to further his conversion aims. It was Sadr as Sahadev who constructed the Khoja set of religious customs that still survives. Khojas, unlike other Muslims, worship not in mosques but in Jamat Khanas, they present a purse to their Imam called a 'johli'. Sahadev wrote the *Das Avatar*, one of the most important books for the Khojas, and shrewdly married Hindu myths to Islam. The incarnations of the Hindu God Vishnu were accepted. Ali, the prophet Mohammed's son-in-law, was represented as the tenth incarnation and each incarnation was given a chapter in the book. Interesting correlations were made connecting religions and myths: the Hindu God Brahma, the creator, was linked with Muhammed; Adam was linked with Shiva, the Hindu destructor; and Ali with Vishnu, the Hindu god of preservation. The Imam of the day, Imam Shah, who had sent Sahadev to India, became an incarnation of Ali, Hindu myths were adopted and Hindu prayers and rituals made part of the Khoja system. Sahadev's life and death would breed its own myths and later Khoja dissidents, disputing the Aga's right to leadership, would assert that

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Sahadev was not a Persian but a man from Multan, in the Punjab; that he had converted the Hindus of Sind not to Shia Ismailism but to Sunni Ismailism. The word Khoja means 'the honourable or worshipful converts' and as we shall see, there was often little the converts worshipped together.

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It is impossible to gauge the exact number of Khojas who lived in India at the time the Aga settled in Bombay, let alone the number who owed allegiance to the Aga. In 1866 Justice Arnold, in the Bombay High Court, would estimate that there were about 2,800 families in Sind, about 3,000 in neighbouring Kattiawar, while in Kutch and in Gujerat the numbers could not be estimated. In Bombay, there were probably about 1,400 families with some Khojas outside India, principally in Zanzibar where there were said to be about 450 Khoja families. And, of course, not all of them accepted the Aga — or paid their tribute with the usual sackfuls of money.

Some thirty years before the Aga had arrived in Bombay, the Aga's demands had created problems in the city's Khoja community. In 1829, a group refused to pay the compulsory tithe to the Aga. The Aga sent his maternal grandmother, Marie Bibi. An energetic and strong woman (the Khans always produced or married strong women), she, with some help from British Courts, proved such a powerful demagogue that, in the end, only twelve of the Khojas persisted in their refusal to pay. Generally her tactic was to gather the Khojas in the Jamat Khana and defend the rights of her grandson to collect his dues. At one such Jamat meeting she collected 250,000 francs. The obstinate twelve were excommunicated and they were to give the dissidents their name: Barbhai, meaning the twelve. They were to remain a thorn in the side of the Aga.

Almost as soon as he had arrived in Bombay in 1847, a very serious dispute arose between them and the Aga. A Khoja died leaving an estate worth Rs 600/700,000 (£60/70,000 at the then exchange rate of 10 rupees to the pound). Two of his daughters had been left nothing and they sought a share under the provisions of the Koran. Those who had benefited from the will declared that under Khoja custom the females could not inherit. The Aga, in a rare show of progressive spirit, supported the sisters but the Barbhai who supported the anti-feminist cause, won. By now the dissenters had secured their own Jamat Khana, the lower apartments of which were used by the Aga's followers. The case and its judgement had fuelled tempers and, on 13th November 1850, the last day of Mohurrum (the holiest of days for the Muslims) seven of the Barbhai were in their own part of the building, engaged in the ceremony of Fatia. Suddenly, several of the Aga's supporters entered their apartments, swords at the ready, and cut down four of the seven. The remaining three managed to escape only by jumping out of a window. Although the Aga was not personally involved, the Deputy Commissioner of Police in Bombay was later to say that 'the general impression in Bombay was that those murders were committed with cognisance and sanction of the Aga.'

Bombay's main paper the *Times of India* reported that after the

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murderers had been hanged the Aga canonized them, writing 'texts of the Quoran upon the corpses with his own hand' and comforting the widows of the murderers with the assurance that he had given their husbands a passport direct to heaven. (This is an expression much loved by the Agas down the ages and used as a means of getting money from their credulous followers). There were also reports in the paper that they 'were buried in the most sacred place of burial in Bombay, that is behind the mausoleum of Peer Mohammed Shah, an honour so great that no esteemable man of the Khoja caste within the last century has been deemed worthy of it.'

This was about the time, as we have seen, when the British were deciding whether to grant the Aga political asylum in Bombay. But, fortunately for him, much of this news remained privy to the community. The *Times of India* report which we have just quoted was written, not in 1850 but in 1861, when fresh disputes had broken out among the Khojas and the paper was reflecting on events that were a decade old. In an English society with limited curiosity about the activities of Indians — in an eight-page *Times of India* of that period the doings of the natives would be confined to a single column beautifully translated from the native press — the Aga remained a backstairs intriguer, his deeds and thoughts committed to confidential government files but rarely in the public domain. Bombay attracted a great many people then and neither the Aga nor his community were sufficiently important to create a public impression. We cannot even be sure where he first settled in Bombay. As we have seen, when he first arrived there in 1847 he had stayed for a time in Bandra, now a prosperous suburb of the city — then a place on the far side of the moon as far as the inhabitants of the city's Flora Fountain centre were concerned. Some time after his return from Calcutta in December 1848, he moved to Mazagoan, now an almost classical inner city area, then a congested ghetto where many of the Aga's followers lived.

We know little of the Aga's personal life during this period. Many years later, when dissidents in the community lodged a case against him in the Bombay High Court, witnesses would describe how the Aga performed his religious duties. He invariably attended the Jamat Khana every morning and lectured his followers on the moral precepts they should follow. Unlike as in the mosque, the Koran was rarely read or taught in the Jamat Khana. The Aga's habit was more often to recite some passages of the Koran in Arabic and then explain them in Persian. Next to him would stand a man who understood Persian but also knew Sindhi, the language of his followers in Bombay. He would translate the great man's words into Sindhi.

But for a religious leader like the Aga, whose fate was inextricably bound up with his followers' willingness to donate money, life always presented complications. In Bombay, unlike Calcutta, the Aga was close to his main throng of followers in Western India. But even this was a very large area of several hundred miles and the Aga had to appoint agents to collect dues from his followers. Some of these agents had family ties with the Aga, others had made a family business of collecting for the Aga. It was, however, like no other business. The Aga had a very shrewd idea of what he

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was owed but by the very nature of his relationship with his followers, his great dependence on their money always put a heavy premium on the loyalty of the collectors. Some time in 1851, the Aga discovered that one of the collectors, a certain Oomaid Ali, was not up to it.

Oomaid Ali came from a family which regularly collected money for the Aga from his followers in Kutch. But, as the Aga discovered, Ali had decided that he would do more than act as an agent — he defaulted with the funds. The Aga replaced him first with a relation of his own, then with another agent. Ali used his influence with the ruler of Kutch (Kutch was ruled by a native Indian prince under overall British control) and got his replacement expelled from the province. About this time, possibly in May of 1851, the Aga's mother, who had been residing in Kutch, died. The Aga successfully obtained permission from the Bombay government to go to Kutch for the purpose of arranging the funeral. Although the Aga had been granted asylum, the British were still sensitive to past Persian allegations about their aiding the Aga's anti-Persian designs. And they started to get worried when what should have been a short stay began to develop into something like a permanent one. The Persian Consul in Bombay complained about the Aga's stay in Kutch and in April 1852 the Bombay Government learned that he had sent for his family to join him. Was he, they wondered, about to rehatch old plots in Baluchistan and Kerman?

The fact of the matter was that the Aga was getting no satisfaction from the ruler of Kutch. As a result of Oomaid Ali's activities, he had received no income from Kutch for almost two years which, as a government report put it, 'exposed [him] to great loss and trouble.' Something like £30/40,000 was involved and the Aga just could not persuade the ruler of Kutch to intervene on his behalf. The ruler pleaded lack of time and the Aga could only linger on, hoping something would turn up.

He tried to convince the Bombay Government that he was hanging on in Kutch in order to protect his followers who, he claimed, were being 'harassed'. He didn't specify how they were being 'harassed'. Probably he saw Oomaid Ali's failure to give him the money he was owed as harassment of his followers. The Bombay Government were having none of this and in the late summer of 1852 made it clear to the Aga that if he didn't return to Bombay fairly quickly his pension would be stopped. On 25th September 1852, almost eighteen months after he had set out for a short visit to Kutch, he arrived back in Bombay: grumpy, complaining of the losses he had suffered as a result of government failure to provide him with enough time. But this relatively minor — if revealing — episode was to mark the last of his major escapades.

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For the Aga, life in Bombay now became a question of securing a position worthy of his name. As Sir Herbert Maddox had shrewdly pointed out, in a letter which we have already quoted, the Aga's 'restless and intriguing temperament' resented what he saw as his inferior position in India. His associates would often tell him how Persians 'much inferior to him in rank'

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were being treated much more generously by the British — certainly getting a lot more than a pension of Rs 1,000 a month. And though the British honoured all sorts of Indian princes and chiefs, no honour came the way of the Aga Khan — a man who had ruled a large province in Persia and married a daughter of the Shah. This made him all the more determined to set himself apart from the Persians and other foreign nationals who lived in Bombay. One sure way of doing this was by establishing his own intelligence network. As ever, the British were obsessed with the activities of the various tribes and clans along the North-West Frontier and, if the Aga could no longer fight with the British, he could certainly claim to supply intelligence.

In fact, his essentially scheming mind and life style made intelligence work of this type quite natural to him. A constant stream of visitors moved back and forth between the Aga in Bombay and his contacts and friends on the North-West Frontier of India. All of them brought the Aga little nuggets of intelligence and the Aga, convinced that they were pure gold, relentlessly conveyed this information to the Government. The British, however, did not share the Aga's enthusiasm as was illustrated in a hilarious account in October 1853. Then, one of the Aga's servants, Alla Ruja, visited Mr Mallett, Chief Secretary to the Bombay Government, and told him an involved tale featuring several Khans. It was somewhat similar to the tale of the three little pigs ... one little Khan going to Kandahar, another to Herat, and yet another to Baluchistan, etc. Mallett, like a good civil servant, dutifully recorded everything Alla Ruja said but was no wiser about what it meant. At the end of it he wrote on the file that he thought it was 'entirely bosh' and he told the Government to thank the Aga for his communication but that it did not seem to concern the British. This, though meant as a British rebuke, did not deter the Aga, for he was a persistent man and, for many years afterwards, claimed unrivalled intelligence from the North-West Frontier provinces, Afghanistan and South Persia.

His other claim to fame was in some ways more distinctive — at least in British eyes. His wife was the daughter of the late Shah of Persia. As we have seen, when the Aga was fighting the Shah he had sent his family away to Kerbala in Iraq. It is not clear which members of his family went to Kerbala then, but over the years various relations did join him on his travels and lived with him in Bombay. It is reasonable to assume, and Government records encourage such assumption, that the Aga had more than one wife, as Muslim law allowed. Thus when the British in Calcutta were making arrangements for the Aga's departure to Bombay, and again during the abortive attempts for him to leave Bombay for Persia, special facilities were made available for the Aga's 'harem' or women. But his principal wife, the daughter of the late Shah, and her son, Ali Shah, so far had not come to India. From Kerbala they had gone to Baghdad where, as luck would have it, they had met the Aga's old friend Rawlinson; he was now British Political Agent in Turkish Arabia and decided to take the Aga's family under his protection. Agents of the Persian Government had been harassing them and Rawlinson felt that,

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since the Aga was now a naturalized British subject, his family was entitled to British help.

However the Aga in Bombay was looking for help of a different kind. He now decided to bring his entire family to Bombay and in April 1853, he wrote to the Government asking for their help in reuniting his family. Rawlinson, ever obliging, supported his old friend. He advised the Chief Secretary of the Government of Bombay, that the Aga's wife was a princess of the royal blood of Persia and her rank, 'as well as ... her husband's services to the British Government' made it necessary 'to show her some attention on her arrival.' The British in India had now constituted an elaborate system of honours and compliments to be given to native rulers and princes: one prince, because of his past services or the position of his state, was entitled to an eleven-gun salute; another was entitled to a seven-gun salute; still another was a first class chief and another a second class one, lower down the pecking order. It had been worked out over the years as a result of the slow British annexation of India, and to disturb the system meant creating problems. The Government of Bombay consulted the Government of India in Calcutta and agreed that 'the lady' should be treated with respect, though 'no public compliments' should be paid to her. Some of the officials suspected that the Aga was using his wife to secure a position for himself higher than he was entitled to as a political refugee. Their suspicions were to be proved right.

In July 1853, within days of the lady's arrival in Bombay, she herself got into the act. She deputed her son Ali Shah to wait on Lord Falkland. Ali Shah was acting as a postman for a letter his mother had written to the Governor. The letter began majestically: 'She who ventures in addressing these few lines to your Lordship is a favoured daughter of the late King of Persia Fata Aly Shaw [sic] of illustrious memory....' It ended with a plea for more money:

> The inadequate pension of 1,000 rupees per month (£100) which His Highness receives from your government is coupled with his other resources, even then [this] is barely enough to meet his expenses. My own resources have been ... usurped by those who could claim the right to superiority namely the sword over such estates in Persia, and I find myself now in a forlorn state, in a foreign land, and in want of sufficient means to maintain myself suitably to my rank.... Several Persian refugees though far inferior in rank and position to what appertains in [my place] have liberally shared in the bounty of your government and enjoy pensions. I trust I appeal not in vain for suitable assistance from your Lordship's government.

The letter was signed Servi Jehan Kajum, the Daughter of The Late Majesty, King of Persia. But increasing pensions was not a decision Lord Falkland could take. It had to go to Lord Dalhousie in Calcutta and, in September 1853, he turned it down. However the letter, and the arrival of Servi Jehan Kajum, had some effect on the Aga's position. Government records show that until the mid-1850s the Aga had been referred to

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consistently as just plain Aga Khan Mehalatee, a 'Persian refugee', a 'Persian Nobleman'. Round about 1859, the Bombay Government began to use the title 'His Highness', a title that had first been used by Servi Jehan Kajum in her letter to Lord Falkland. There is nothing in Government records to indicate how such a title was bestowed and, given the meticulous nature of the records, that seems strange. Very likely, after the arrival of the Aga's wife in Bombay, and the general spread of the news of his position as a Persian nobleman with a high-ranking wife who was the daughter of the late Shah of Persia, the title 'His Highness' began to be circulated in Bombay, at first informally, but by 1859 it had become part of valuable Government records. It is a matter of some interest that throughout the family history, right up to the present day, rank and position has mattered a lot to the Khans. The third Aga Khan — grandfather of the present one — as we shall see, often petitioned the Government for honour and position: and sometimes secured them. And perhaps the first British honour won by the family was not quite as accidental as it appears.

That it made a difference to the Aga Khan cannot be doubted. Five years earlier, in February 1849, he had asked the Bombay Government for an escort of native infantry during the affair of the Durga. In the past this festival had created conflicts between his community and other communities in Bombay and the Aga was keen to have, by his side, some Government troops which would both protect him and establish his position with the Bombay Government. But the Government, still not sure of the Aga's status had refused, suggesting rather cheekily that he ought to use his authority to maintain order during any possible trouble. But by the time the Aga came to be referred to as His Highness in Bombay, he seemed to have established a certain rapport with officials in the city and discovered amongst them people who, like Rawlinson, thought he deserved this high honour. However, if individual officials in Bombay were keen on the Aga, this did not extend to the Government of India based in Calcutta, or in other places in British India. For instance, in August 1858, the Aga wrote to the Government complaining about the injustices alleged to have been suffered by his followers in Muscat — more likely he was having difficulty in collecting money from them. Letters had flowed between the Resident in Muscat, the Government in Bombay, the Secretary of State for India in London and the Governor General in Calcutta which showed that while the Government of Bombay consistently referred to the Aga Khan as 'His Highness' and extended great courtesies to him, the others still saw him as plain 'Aga Khan Mehalatee'. And the Secretary of State for India dismissively called him 'a Persian refugee and High Priest of the Koja [sic] Sect.'

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That the other side of fame and honour is notoriety the Aga was soon to discover. For over a decade he had been living in Bombay with little or no public face, lording it over his community and involved in various ways, as we have seen, with the British authorities. Now, suddenly in the 1860s, the

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Aga's and the Khoja community's dirty linen began to be washed in public, in the influential English newspapers of British India. In the past, disagreements between the Aga and some of his Khoja followers had been about how much money he could collect from them and who actually owned the Jamat Khanas — the Khojas' communal places of worship. Now a different kind of dissident began to surface. Foremost among them was a Khoja named Dhurumsey Poonjabhoy. Poonjabhoy led a group of Khojas who claimed that the Aga was preventing the community from being educated and that he was, in fact, dead set against the poorer Khojas using the school that the English had set up for their education. The Aga, he alleged, had been so incensed by the school that he, or his followers, had threatened the life of Poonjabhoy. On 27th April 1861, Poonjabhoy received an anonymous letter written in Gujerati warning him that he and his two sons were to be killed. The letter seems to have been written by the killer, who identified himself as 'your blood-thirsty friend', and appears to have been designed to strike the maximum fear in Poonjabhoy, telling him that the killer and his friends, had travelled down from Kathiawar in Gujerat to Bombay a few days earlier in order to perform this deed.

Poonjabhoy's response was to place a front-page advertisement in the *Bombay Times and Standard* offering a reward of Rs 2,000 to any person who could give information about this 'blood-thirsty friend'. The *Bombay Times and Standard* was then edited by Robert Knight, who did more than merely carry the advertisement. He decided that this was a campaigning story. Until then the British in Bombay had only the vaguest of notions about the Aga Khan: some of them had seen an elderly Persian nobleman wandering about the racecourse, but few knew that he had any connection with the hoary legends of the 'Old Man of the Mountain'. Knight decided to set the record straight in a long, detailed exposé.

On 4th May 1861, the *Bombay Times and Standard* briefly narrated the history of the Khojas and how and why the Aga Khan, a Persian nobleman, came to live in Bombay. The Aga had been making inflammatory speeches to his followers in the Jamat Khana in Mazagoan and Knight had no doubt that he was plotting the murder of Dhurumsey Poonjabhoy and his friends. In one of those thunderous editorials in which the English language press of India were beginning to specialize, Knight denounced the Aga as

> the open enemy of all improvement and progress in the caste, because he is well-informed enough to know that his pretensions rest only upon the ignorance of the people. There can be no peace for the Khoja tribe unless Government banishes the man.... Politically it is a grave error to allow the residence of the Aga amongst a dense population of ignorant and fanatical Mohammedans, such as surround us.

Here the tales of the Assassins of the Middle Ages seemed to be working against the Aga. Far from creating a romantic legend, he evoked memories of the terror the Assassins had wrought. This mingled with the ever-present British fear of disorder among the natives; it was only four years since the

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mutiny had been put down, one in which the Muslims had played a prominent part. And Knight was aware of how little the British knew about the real feelings of the people they ruled. A leader amongst them who could claim a total loyalty based on fear and fanaticism, so much so that his followers would be prepared to murder for it, would — in different circumstances — be very dangerous. Probably Knight exaggerated for, as he himself admitted, there were no more than 15,000 to 20,000 Khojas in Bombay. But his article had a dramatic effect. The English community in India, let alone Bombay, was small and English language newspapers all over the country reprinted each other's articles. Knight's article created ripples of excitement throughout Anglo-India. The *Parsee Punch* even printed a cartoon showing the Aga's son-in-law prostrating himself at the feet of his arch-enemy Dhurumsey Poonjabhoy.

Waving the *Bombay Times and Standard* and the *Parsee Punch*, the Aga stormed into the offices of Mr Foggart, the Deputy Commissioner of Police in Bombay, denouncing both Knight and the cartoonist of the *Parsee Punch*. Foggart tried to calm the Aga down, advising him that even the great men of England were regularly attacked and lampooned in the press. The Aga, far from being mollified, became all the more furious. 'There can be no comparison whatsoever between any great man and myself. I am the descendant and incarnation of the prophet and I would rather put a pistol ball to my head than submit to be so defamed.' The Aga had been speaking either in Persian or Urdu and actually used the expression 'Khoda Ka Mafuk', which means 'I am like God'. Foggart remonstrated, 'Aga Sahib, you are talking like a child.' This only further angered the Aga. 'What talking like a child? How did Stalker shoot himself?'' (A general called Stalker had recently committed suicide.) But, Foggart replied, Stalker had then lost his senses. Foggart, who was also speaking in Urdu, used the expression 'Deewana hoowa', meaning he had become mad. The Aga looked at the Deputy Commissioner with steely eyes and said 'hum be deewana hoowa' ('I, too, have become mad.') With this, he walked out of the office and as the English policeman saw him to his carriage the Aga, almost demented, kept repeating 'Hum be deewana hoowa.'

But Foggart evidently kept his senses and managed to effect a reconciliation between the Aga and Dhurumsey Poonjabhoy. On 14th May 1861, the Aga and Dhurumsey Poonjabhoy effected a ceremonial reconciliation at the Jamat Khana and the Aga placed a shawl of honour on the dissident, requesting the community to pay all due respect to him as they would to the Aga's friend. The *Bombay Times and Standard* was willing to let bygones be bygones but reflecting the developing evangelical fervour among the British for reform and modernization in India, it warned the Aga not to stand in the way of progress: 'The people must be educated, and none can be permitted to hold back the lamp of knowledge from them.'

But as Foggart himself analysed, in a note to the Commissioner of Police, the differences between the Aga and the dissidents were deep, covering not merely education but a whole host of other things. The dissidents wanted to erect their own Jamat Khana, wanted the community's officers to be elected

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by members of the community not appointed by the Aga, they wanted a proper accounting of monies received and disbursed and, perhaps the most sensitive point, were opposed to allowing the women to visit the Aga at his residence. The Aga often attended marriage ceremonies where his blessings were eagerly sought. Occasionally he delegated these powers to his son, who seems to have taken his feudal rights a bit too seriously. According to rumours that swept the community, the son, in blessing a bride (this being the age of child marriages in India), demanded his hereditary right of 'first insertion'. The girl was rendered so helpless that she had to be carried home to her bed. By November 1862, the Khoja community's dirty linen was again being washed in public. The *Times of India* carried a letter from a dissident alleging various Aga misdemeanours, including preventing those he did not like from attending the Jamat and requiring all his followers to sign a loyalty bond. The *Times of India*'s indignation was almost as great as that of the *Bombay Times and Standard* had been eighteen months before, 'this man forms the nucleus and life of a most dangerous and degrading superstition, which his removal from the place would go far to destroy.'

But apart from provoking yet another fascinating debate among the English newspapers in India, with the Aga finding his champion in a weekly called the *Saturday Reviewer*, nothing seems to have come of it. By 1864 the debate reached London, in the form of a pamphlet entitled *A Voice from India*. Written by a man describing himself as a 'native of Bombay now resident in London', it appealed to the British legislature against the 'usurped and oppressive domination of the Aga.'

Although the pamphlet claimed to have been printed by Waterlows, the actual printing suggested a more primitive printer. It recited the various sins of the Aga and reproduced, almost verbatim, the various articles and editorials written about him by the English newspapers in India. As additional proof, the pamphleteer cited a conversation with a clergyman of the Church of England who had lived in India but had now returned to Middlesex. The Anglican had no doubt that 'a worse man' than the Aga 'does not exist. He [Aga] claims to be an apostle and asserts his right to deflower the bride who comes to him for a blessing of marriage. It is a great pity that such a wretch has not long since been hurled from power.'

But for all the rhetoric, the only way the dissidents could seek to hurl the Aga from power was through the courts and, in 1866, what has come to be known as 'the Aga Khan case' was heard in the Bombay High Court. The case was heard before Sir Joseph Arnold in April and June 1866. The argument in the case and the examination of witnesses took twenty-five days and Sir Joseph finally delivered his long awaited, and eventually very lengthy judgement, on 12th November 1866. The judgement was so long that the Bombay Government issued it as a small booklet. The plaintiffs and defendants were all Khojas, of course, and of the defendants, only the principal one, Mahomed Hoosu Hoosanee, as the Aga Khan was named, did not appear in person. But this was as much a case about Khojas, as about English justice in India. All the accused in the case were represented

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by British members of the Bar; they argued in front of a British judge to decide the fate of a community which had never seen Britain.

The arguments revolved around the most fundamental questions of the Aga Khan's right to claim money from his followers, and the nature and belief of his followers. The accused claimed that they were not followers of the Aga Khan, they were Sunni Muslims, and that the Aga Khan had no right to interfere with their community, order them about, have access to their money, their funds and their places of worship. These were communal places of worship for the entire Muslim sect, not the Aga Khan's private property.

The gravest charge against the Aga Khan was that he derived immense money from his followers — his income was estimated at £10,000 a year. This, alleged the reformers, was money used not for the benefit of his community, not to educate them or build up great social and cultural centres, but for his racing interests. Scobell, one of the lawyers representing the dissidents, repeatedly tried to probe the Aga's lifestyle. How much of the money paid to him went for horses? Some, admitted the Aga's racing secretary. How many wives did the Aga have? Surely, suggested Scobell, too many to be thought 'decent' by the Shia community. But Justice Arnold did not take to Scobell's line of questioning — either on horses or women.

In the past, British judges deciding on complicated Indian religious issues had allowed accepted practices to continue. But in this case Arnold saw a chance of impressing British justice on complicated, obscure, oriental matters. With the sort of flamboyance that we have come to associate with a Denning, or a Scarman, Arnold set about this task. He was, in effect, setting out the historical position of a community whose Imam claimed a 900-year-old family line. The judgement is accepted as a classic, and it remains brilliant reading. But running right through it are certain unmistakable British views of the period. In a remarkable inversion, Arnold saw the Sunnis as the 'popish', 'romanish', undesirable Catholics of the Islamic world, and the Shias as the reformists, Protestants.

Sunni practices, Sunni beliefs, Sunni fervour, Sunni enthusiasm were derided. The Shia was seen as the under-dog. The romantic legend of Ali and the tragic, essentially violent, history of the sect were reviewed. To read the judgement now is not only to admire the clarity of Arnold's mind, but also to admit that Sir Joseph Arnold had decided that if a judgement had to go one way, then it was better to go in the Shia direction.

There were probably political reasons for this, even if covert ones. The Sunnis were the great majority of Muslims, the Afghans with whom Britain was in dispute were Sunnis, and the greatest Muslim power was Turkey, secure in Sunni belief. Relations with Turkey were fraught, and Queen Victoria had told Disraeli that he ought to tell the Sultan of Turkey that she ruled more Muslims that the Sultan did. Perhaps that feeling against Sunni Muslims was part of Arnold's creed. Whatever the reasons, he showed a distinct anti-Sunni feeling in his judgement and found all the arguments of the Aga Khan to be favourable. The historical result of the judgement was that it finally established the Aga Khan and his family at the undisputed head of the Khoja community. Until then the Khoja assets and estates had

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been a communal affair. The year after the judgement was delivered, the Jamat Khanas and the other assets were made over to the Aga Khan, and subsequent acquisitions have all been made in the name of the Aga.

Arnold's judgement more than freed the Aga from dissidents. It seemed to establish his position in the city and he now began to make his mark at the racecourse. The Bombay racecourse was then at Byculla, somewhat to the south of the present racecourse, and had been going for some fifty years. If at the beginning the horses were rather poor, Bombay had soon acquired a stable of imported Arab horses which were generally housed in the congested Bhendi Bazaar area, where many of the Aga's followers lived. A few years after the Aga settled in Bombay, the racecourse moved to its present location at Mahalaxmi. The flats that had once been swamps had been slowly reclaimed, though they were never ever to escape the fact that the open main drain, carrying away the sewage of Bombay, ran across the flats to the sea. Eventually the drain was covered in a pipe, though to this day the casual visitor driving to the city from the airport, and across the racecourse, can get more than a whiff of the Bombay effluent.

At the racecourse, the Aga was now a striking old man. He had gone slightly lame, his beard, though black and glossy, was much thinner than the one the British had admired in Kandahar. He almost invariably wore a tall black sheepskin hat and a rather loose green tunic, and he had begun to acquire some of the racing lore that is now part of his family's heritage. Always willing to take a bet, he was a shrewd fixer of odds and had the air of a man who could mix in English society, at home both in their clubs and at their parties.

But even here the Aga, or rather his racing methods, provoked controversy. One day an Englishman was passing the racecourse when he saw a large grey Australian horse come galloping past. It seemed very distressed and made a noise as if it was being suffocated. The Englishman noticed the horse had something over its nose and asked a 'horsey-looking gentleman' who was standing by, what it was. He replied that the grey was one of the Aga's horses and they had just been watching the Aga's new method of training.

This involved putting a leather muzzle over the horse's mouth and then tying a handkerchief over it to keep it from breathing. The Englishman was so upset that he immediately dashed off a letter to the *Times of India* in which he declared that having witnessed this, if somebody should now ask him 'which I had rather see ill-treated, a Musselman or a horse, I think I should say the former.' The *Times of India* printed the letter under the heading 'gross cruelty to race horses', though the sentiments probably tell us as much about English attitudes to Muslims, as to the Aga.

Apart from this, the Aga seems to have featured little in the city's life and his main concern now was to make sure that the precious pension continued. In March 1859 he had once again tried to secure an increase and failed. The Government had also turned down his request that his son be employed in one of the Irregular Corps of Horses maintained for high-ranking natives by the British. The Government of Bombay had concluded

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that 'the connections of the family were not such as to make the proposed employment desirable.' By 1874, with the Aga now seventy-one, he was getting quite worried about the family's status after his death. On 21st August 1874, the Aga wrote yet another letter — this time to the Governor of Bombay, Sir Phillip Edmund Woodhouse. Although it repeated the familiar Aga story, this was a letter of an old man:

> I am unacquainted with the English language, but the pension having been granted partly in consideration of loss of property which affected my family as well as myself, I am under the impression that the pension was to be continued after my death. I have recently ascertained that nothing has been settled on this head. At the age of seventy-one, I cannot expect personally to enjoy this pension for many years longer, and it is naturally a matter of great anxiety to me to be assured that it will be continued to my family.... I have fought and bled, sacrificed relatives, followers and property in furthering British interests.... And I beg that my declining years may be consoled by the assurance that permanent acknowledgement of my services has been secured to my family by the British Government.

It was almost a year later — on 26th June 1875 — before the Aga received a formal reply. The reply came from the Viceroy, and the Aga's request had been the subject of intense consultation between the Bombay Government, the Bombay Commissioner of Police and the Government of India in Calcutta. The question was, did the Aga Khan's influence in Bombay merit the pension being continued to his family? After consultation with the Bombay Government, and particularly the Bombay police, the Viceroy had concluded that while the family's connections in Bombay did not amount to much, the Aga's intimacy with the ruler of Kabul still meant something and 'it would be advisable to continue the pension to the son.'

In 1877 the Prince of Wales, who was later to become King Edward VII and King Emperor of India, visited the country. During his visit to Bombay, he dropped in at the Aga's home. It is not clear why he should have done this. He may have been seduced by the romance of the Assassins, by the tales he had heard of this living God who could claim such privileges and yet get a British pension — but whatever it was, the portly Edward visited the Aga at his house in Mazagoan which was called Aga Hall.

The Aga Khan's grandson, Sir Sultan Muhammed would later recall the occasion:

> When the present King Emperor honoured my grandfather with a visit in Bombay, my grandfather received the King according to old Persian custom that when an Emperor or Sultan visits a subject the host stands all the time near the guest's chair or sofa and does not sit down in the presence of the royal visitor throughout the interview. Though my grandfather was then above 70 years of age and had a broken leg, he

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stood above the King's chair and explained why he did not sit down, when the King asked the old man to sit near him.

There may have been good medical reasons, (such are the afflictions of haemorrhoids,) for the Aga to stand — and what it did to his physique can only be guessed at — but there were to be no other great public occasions for the first Aga Khan. On the night of 12th April 1881 he died in Bombay, presumably of old age, and was buried in Mazagoan. He was seventy-seven.

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Ali Shah was a man of fifty when he succeeded his father as Aga II. If his life had not been quite as turbulent as his father's, it had been a dislocating and unusual one. (See illustration, page 101.) Exiled early from his native Kerman and sent to Kerbala and then Baghdad, he had come to his father's adopted home of Bombay a grown man quite set in his ways. These ways were generally that of the country squire fond of hunting and shooting. When the Prince of Wales had asked him how he climbed trees to shoot tigers, he had proudly answered that he shot them from the ground. Hagiographers have tried to suggest that he was a great reforming leader who sought to educate and modernize his community. All the evidence we have suggests that, like his father, he did not welcome change and preferred the old feudal methods. In 1878, the Government, petitioned by dissident Khojas, began to toy with the idea of setting up a commission that would lay down the Khoja law of succession. The Government thought either the first Aga or his son might like to be a member. But both Aga I and Aga II put up a fierce resistance, the Judge billed to head the commission proved lukewarm, and the plan was dropped.

In fact, the only definite thing known about Ali Shah was the problems his title posed the Government. As we have seen, the Government had reluctantly agreed that the first Aga's pension should be bequeathed to his son. But what about the title 'His Highness', which the arrival of Ali Shah's mother had gained for the first Aga? Was the son entitled to it? Bombay felt that this was a small favour and 'it would be very impolitic to alienate his goodwill and hurt his feelings by the refusal.' The Calcutta Government were not convinced. The old Aga had done something, but what had the son done. And had not Bombay, in their earlier and following discussions on the pension, said 'his connections and general position are not as high as his father's?'

But Bombay persisted, though it was more than a year after the Government discussion had first started — and sixteen months after Ali Shah had become Aga — that Calcutta agreed:

> As the Governor of Bombay regards the matter of the continuance of the title of much importance, the Governor General will not refuse to accept their recommendation ... the concession is by no means a small one. The title of 'Highness' is ordinarily used by the Government of India in the case only of considerable ruling chiefs; and this practice has scarcely ever

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been departed from. In obtaining the proposed designation, Aga Ali Shah will enjoy a privilege which does not belong to the Prime Minister and virtual ruler of Nepal, or to many chiefs who govern their own territories. The Governor General hopes, therefore, that the Aga Ali Shah will fully appreciate the very exceptional nature of the concession which the Governor General is now pleased to approve.

When, on 9th August 1882, Bombay informed Ali Shah he was duly grateful. The family and followers gathered together to celebrate the day with illuminations and fireworks and Ali pledged his eternal gratitude.

He was, however, not to enjoy his honour for long and it was his love for wild fowling that was to lead to his early death. In August 1885, he went out shooting in the rain, got soaked, contracted pneumonia and was dead within eight days. He was fifty-four. His successor was an eight-year-old boy called Sultan Muhammed. He was terribly short-sighted — although his family were not to discover this for some years — and was in such delicate health that doctors had advised his parents that they could not expect him to live much beyond twenty-five. The future was, however, to prove rather different.

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BOOK TWO

THE VOLUPTUARY AND THE HOURIS

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Aga Khan III — First Phase (1881 – 1924)

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Chapter 6

The Young Man from Bombay

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There are two early photographs of the third Aga Khan aged seven and eight years old. (See illustrations, pages 102, 103.) The latter shows him the moment he was installed as Imam. A young boy in heavy robes and a large Persian cap, holding a sort of fly whisk, is seated in front of what looks like an unusually large cot. Surrounding him on all sides are men wearing the flat circular doughnut-shaped turbans that were — and still are — popular. Some of the men sport long flowing beards, some hold sticks, others look grey or terribly fierce. The other photograph is more boyish. Standing next to his mother, he is dressed in a sailor's uniform with a coat decorated with braids and medallions and on his head is a sailor's cap. He is trying to look fierce — but only succeeds in developing a pout and cannot hide the boyish chubbiness of his cheeks or the softness of his eyes.

The third Aga's childhood cannot have been easy or simple. His two full brothers had died in infancy, two half-brothers had died when still fairly young men. He himself was known to be in very delicate health, and a number of English doctors had warned that it was unlikely he would live beyond twenty-five. He also grew up in an all-enveloping sense of gloom and despondency — characteristic of all families, but particularly Asian families — that followed the death of his father.

Aga Ali Shah had not wanted the child to know of his divine status and suddenly an eight-year-old found himself subject to the most rigorous discipline. He would later confess that he did not know how he had survived it to go on to live to a fairly old age. For the next ten years, until he was eighteen, his life followed a strict, unchanging pattern. November to April was spent in Bombay; as it grew hotter in April or early May — often the cruellest month in India — the family moved to a hill station about 100 miles from Bombay called Mahabaleshwar; with the rains they came down to Poona, still hilly and cooler than Bombay; it was November, and the start of what the English called the cold weather season, before they finally returned to Bombay.

If this was boring, the routine of the day itself was puritanical in the extreme. Nobody realized that the poor boy was short-sighted, an affliction that was not cured until many years later, and his mother's insistence on two hours' calligraphy daily was just sheer torture. In addition to this, the

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Aga was being slowly, inevitably, introduced to his 'divine' status. Every now and again, he received his followers who came to pay homage and respects, and hoped by presents and money to win a place in Paradise.

We have very few first-hand pictures of the young Aga, except one that was drawn for us by the Dowager Countess of Jersey. She visited India in the autumn of 1888, and while she was a guest of Lord Reay, the Governor of Bombay, the Aga Khan, then thirteen and accompanied by his uncle, was brought to pay his respects to the 'Governor Sahib' and his wife, 'Memsahib' Lady Reay. The Dowager Countess recalled 'a stout youth with dark eyes and hair and a very composed manner.... We were told that he sometimes had a milk bath and that his followers were then allowed to drink the milk which he had bathed in.'

This charming story was somewhat spoiled for the Dowager when she was told that the tradition of the Aga Khan family was that each head of the family was assassinated in turn, and that the young boy she had met would, in turn, be killed to make way for a successor.

The story neatly mixed the legends of strange Orientals and the ritual sacrifice of the Chief to be found in many tribes. Legends, of course, are part of the Aga Khan story. The many articles and books each repeat the clichés and the distorted half truths of the previous one. A bit of embellishment here, a little fact added there, all adding up to a story that starts as myth and remains a fantasy throughout. The third Aga Khan, while lamenting such myths in the introduction of his *Memoirs*, did little to dispel them. Thus, he tells us that there were no guardians to guide his childhood; he attributes wonderful powers to his mother, completely ignores a man who was his legal guardian and, of course, nowhere mentions the precious British pension for which his grandfather had struggled so valiantly.

Within days of the death of Aga Ali Shah, the Government of Bombay had received a petition from his son Sultan Mohammed, pleading that the pension of Rs 1,000 granted to his father be continued. Since the third Aga was only eight, we may presume the letter was the work of his guardians. The Bombay Government were keen to continue the pension: more, they also wanted to confer the title of His Highness on the little boy. But, once again Calcutta was extremely dubious. The Government were then about to enact the Khoja Succession Bill — something that both the father and the grandfather of the third Aga had opposed — and which was meant to 'circumscribe the Aga's privileges'. Such a moment, Bombay felt, was 'an unsuitable time for withdrawing any of the indulgences hitherto granted by the Government of India to the spiritual head of the Khojas.' Calcutta took its time to reply — though eventually it agreed with Bombay.

With his status settled, the Aga's guardians decided on his education — at home, by tutors provided by the Jesuits of Bombay. Then, as now, the Jesuits ran some of the best education institutions in the country — not so much to convert, as to influence minds and, in the process, provide free education for poor Catholics at the expense of the rich Muslims and Hindus.

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Two of the tutors were Irish, a Mr Gallagher and a Mr Kenny, while the third was a Mr Lawrence — presumably English. But, while all three quickly established a rapport with the young Aga, it was Kenny who was to help Aga III discover a new world. For as soon as he saw the young lad settle down to his studies, he realized he was terribly short-sighted. Kenny had worked in a firm of opticians before he became a teacher and overriding the objections of the Aga's family, who could not believe that this young man, born to be God, could be sort-sighted, took him to an optical firm and had him fitted with a pair of glasses. Suddenly, the word that was blurred became clear, and the Aga was at last relieved of the misery that had afflicted him for so long.

Mr Gallagher, Mr Lawrence and Mr Kenny all encouraged the Aga to read widely. And he did read very widely. His particular favourite was European history, especially the period since the defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo. Later, the Aga would claim that 'he had steeped' himself in French literature and French history of the whole nineteenth century, particularly the Paris of the two Napoleons, Balzac and Barrès. Maybe he did, and he was certainly knowledgeable about nineteenth-century European history. But the nature of his education meant that he never quite developed a disciplined mind. The Aga never sat an examination in his life, and while the merit of examinations can be overstated, the unstructured reading that he was exposed to had its effect in later years. His letters to friends would almost be a form of a stream of consciousness, pouring forth ideas from various sources. While his imagery could, at times, be quite striking, his English tutors would have been puzzled by his use of certain expressions — they could certainly be very original. His sentences were often like a runaway train with not a stop, semi-colon or comma to be seen, and grammar and syntax sacrificed for sheer vivid imagery. The Aga was later to give much of the credit for the breadth and liberality of his education to his mother, Lady Ali Shah. (See illustration, page 101.) She was by all accounts a remarkable woman — one of those women of the Jenana (ladies' quarters) whose strength, although never made public, is all the greater because of the struggles they have to put up. The idea that because you put a woman behind closed doors you necessarily deprive her of all powers is a secular Western idea. It is certainly true in general, but women in the East can often use the very means of their imprisonment, their very seclusion, to build up reserves of strength, character and determination that allow them to break through and become more powerful than men who have lived all their life in the open air and the freedom of normal society.

Lady Ali Shah had to take charge of her household when her husband died, and she displayed then, and later, those characteristics that some of the women of the Jenana can acquire — and have acquired — over the ages. Related to the Persian royal family, she showed herself to be a shrewd judge of men and property, managing the rather unruly estate and collection of people that her husband and her father-in-law had left behind. She would in later years acquire something of a reputation in Bombay as one of the few Muslim ladies willing and able to converse with the wives of

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the leading British officials. The Government would also confer honours on her; Edwin Montagu, a later Secretary of State for India, would have tea with her during his visit to the country, and Lady Willingdon, wife of the Governor of Bombay, showed signs of intimate affection.

The only portrait we have of her shows her fairly well into middle age and looking very like the women who tell fortunes at a fair. Everything, apart from her face, is covered by a white sheet, her legs are crossed and she has one hand on her ankles, as if she is half expecting a challenge, or a customer wanting to know his fortune.

It is a portrait that captures her well. For all the sweetness and light that she radiated for her son, there was also a strong protective instinct. She was quick to react to any criticisms of the Aga — and frightened the life out of those who opposed her son. One of the Khoja dissident groups would later allege that she ran the 'Moto Punth', a secret religious group of female followers of the Aga, which had an entrance fee ranging from Rs 250 to Rs 1,000.

Such was her influence, that dissidents alleged they could not trust even their own wives and the Aga would proudly boast, 'I have a private secretary in every home.' But remarkable as Lady Ali Shah must have been, how important she was in educating the young Aga is open to question. Another man seems to have played a big part in his early education; he was Tharia Topan.

For some years prior to becoming the Aga's guardian, Topan, then resident in Zanzibar, had tried to get British help to start schools for the Khojas — even offering his own money. But though the head of the British mission in Zanzibar, Sir John Kirk, agreed that Khojas needed to be educated and that 'education amongst the Khojas had been systematically discouraged by the last two Aga Khans', he could not sanction the money for such sectional needs. Later, when Topan came to Bombay and became the third Aga's guardian, he renewed his requests. But it would appear that, under pressure from the Aga Khan's family, he was forced to ask for help with a hospital not a school. Even then, the British felt that the Khans should use their own considerable wealth to educate their people and not look to the English. It is interesting to note that the Aga, in his *Memoirs*, does not mention Tharia Topan at all.

The young Aga was soon being noticed with approval in the right circles in Bombay and Poona. He had inherited some of the horse racing love of his grandfather and, along with his cousin Aga Shamsuddim — one of his few childhood friends — he had begun to make a mark on the Bombay racecourse; winning the Nizam Gold Cup, the most important and valuable race then in Western India, four times. The Aga had also fallen in love — or so he would later claim. One of the Aga's uncles, Aga Jungishah, had a beautiful daughter called Shahzadi Begum. The lady had caught the Aga's eye and he got his mother to arrange a marriage. The Aga would always strenuously deny that this was an arranged marriage, in the pattern common in Asian families — then and now. He would always assert that this was a true love match. But before the two lovers could be united,

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Shahzadi, together with her father, brother and mother, went on a Haj pilgrimage to Mecca in the summer of 1896. On the way back to India they stopped in the Red Sea port of Jeddah. Here, in a mysterious murder that was never explained, Jungishah and his son were killed. Although the murderers were caught and imprisoned, they were soon found dead — poisoned in their cells.

In the intriguing, closed world of the Khojas, this murder only provided grist to the rumour mill. It began to be suggested that the murderers were fanatical followers of the Aga who killed on his instruction. Whatever the merits of the rumour, the murders had a dramatic effect on the Aga. Throughout the summer of 1896 he was seriously ill, having a succession of fevers and some very painful rheumatic symptoms. But despite this, the marriage went ahead. Some in the community said that Lady Ali Shah insisted on the marriage merely to silence the rumours. If so, it was a shrewd political move, and the wedding in Poona was one of those grand Indian feudal affairs where the celebrations went on for a fortnight, hundreds of guests were housed in specially erected tents and there were various forms of entertainment.

Perhaps the tragedy of her father's death did affect Shahzadi; the marriage seems to have been a disaster almost as soon as it began. We have no record of what or how Shahzadi felt. She is almost a non-person in the Aga Khan story — there are no pictures of her and biographers of the Aga Khan have dwelt on the three European wives who followed Shahzadi. The Aga, in his own *Memoirs* dismisses the marriage in one short paragraph. One moment the marriage is being celebrated in great style in Poona, the next the bride and bridegroom can barely communicate with each other. The Aga's explanation was that this was a marriage between two 'ignorant and innocent' people who could not quite use knowledge to bridge the gulf that began to develop between them. 'Ignorance' may have involved sexual ignorance, though this seems unlikely; more likely it was the growing cultural and social gulf between the Aga and his wife. The Aga was seeking to make his mark as an Anglicized Indian in Western society, and his wife, brought up in strict Jenana quarters could hardly follow there. As the Aga moved into the wide world, his wife languished in the closed world, full of 'resentment and reproach.' She was to die prematurely in middle age, fat, neglected and scorned by the Aga and his family — and forgotten by everybody else.

But the unhappy marriage did little to curtail the Aga's public activities. In fact it spurred him on. In the late summer of 1897, bubonic plague swept Bombay. Fortunately for Bombay, a Russian Jew, Professor Haffkine, had been working to find an inoculation following Pasteur's work in this field. But Haffkine's method met with scepticism, both from the Indians and from some of the English. The Aga, however, took up his cause enthusiastically and decided to set a personal example to his Khoja followers. He lent Haffkine one of his bungalows to carry on his work, got himself inoculated and effectively demonstrated to his ignorant, superstition-ridden followers, that this revolutionary method of preventing disease was not harmful.

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The Aga was later to see this as the first great battle in his life. Just turned twenty, rather solemn looking and full of himself, he was to see this as the moment that he proved to himself that his own inner self-confidence could match the doubts and criticisms of the outside world. The outer world was quick to appreciate this. In 1897, to mark Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, the Aga presented an address to the Queen; not merely on behalf of the Ismaili community, or even on behalf of the Muslims of Western India, but on behalf of 'a representative assemblage of the citizens of Bombay in Poona.' The Aga, of course, was representing a forelock-tugging Raj loyalist community. In his memorial to the Queen, the Aga not only praised the magnificent reign of Victoria, but referred to her solicitude for Indian children and compared her rule with that of an ancient Persian king renowned for his dispensation of even-handed justice. The Aga's world had little to do with the vibrant, nationalist India that was growing all around him; even then, there could be no denying the sudden prominence of this twenty-year-old in loyalist circles. The Aga had to travel to Simla, in Northern India, to express his loyalty to Victoria, the actual presentation having been made to Lord Elgin, then Viceroy in India. This was only the second time the Aga had properly travelled outside Western India; he returned to prepare for his biggest journey — to the West.

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In some ways, much of what the Aga had done so far in his life was a preparation for this trip. The British in India, quite naturally, and very nostalgically, would speak of the pleasures and wonders of 'home'. To most Indians this 'home' was an exotic place of which they knew little, except as a source for the Sahibs and Memsahibs that came forth to rule India. And many of the Aga's followers would be in that category. But for the Aga, like many of the Anglicized Indians, 'home' was at once more tangible and more attainable. The British Empire quite assiduously cultivated the image of England as the mother country and it was not uncommon for Anglicized Indians to talk of going 'home', though they may never have seen that home. Almost as a preparation, the Aga and his family had begun to distance themselves from their followers.

Bombay, like all other Raj cities, was divided into the Indian and the European quarters. The Indians lived in what was called the Bazaar — an area that alternately repelled and fascinated the British. Most of the Khojas lived in the congested inner-city bazaar areas of Bombay, like Bhendi Bazaar and Mazagoan, a Bombay of narrow streets, many shops, noise, dirt, milling crowds and the sort of Indian anarchy that tended to frighten the British. The Aga Hall in Mazagoan was the centre of this world and both the first and the second Aga had held court there for their devotees.

But some time in the 1890s — it is not clear when — the Aga and his family decided to move out of the bazaar and into the European part of Bombay, where the streets were wide, the houses and bungalows big and sprawling and the air cool, calm and more like 'home'. Much the most

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prestigious area in this European part of Bombay then — and now — was Malabar Hill. As its name suggested, it was a hill, though not very high, but one beautifully and strategically located. Its head jutted out into the Arabian Sea and the bungalows perched on the hill overlooked the rest of Bombay. Just a few years previous to this, Bombay had acquired its first horse-drawn tram network, copying the example of European cities. Not only were the horse-drawn trams shipped from England but also the horses, complete with straw hats to protect their English brows from the tropical sun. The residents at Malabar Hill could come driving in these trams along the foot of the cliff to the sea level below, enjoying perhaps one of the best panoramic sights in the world. And it was at Malabar Hill that the Aga now built — or acquired — a house, appropriately named Land's End; a large, sprawling house built very much in the colonial tradition of the time, with wide verandahs, large high-ceilinged rooms, and courtyards opening out to the Arabian Sea. The Aga would often gaze across the sea and wonder about the exotica that lay beyond it. In 1898, he decided to explore. Lady Ali Shah probably felt that this was safe enough; he was married and unlikely to be trapped by Western females, something dreaded in India where it was believed that the West was populated by white, nubile females eager to trap rich, unwary Indians. But, as Lady Ali Shah was to discover, marriage to Shahzadi was no bar for the Aga.

In February 1898, accompanied by two members of his household, the Aga travelled in a brand new liner of the Messageries Maritime Fleet to Marseilles. It was the height of the Riviera season — which began in the winter — and the Aga was 'dazzled and awed' by the European monarchs and royal families gathered in the Riviera. But he could only stare and dream. He knew nobody, and apart from his two personal attendants, there was hardly anybody he could speak to. For the ten days he was in the Riviera, he probably spoke only half a dozen words with the hotel staff. In fact, finding a hotel was a great problem for him, as almost everything was booked, but fortunately he did manage to secure a room in the very hotel Queen Victoria was staying in, at Cimiez, up the road from Nice. For the Aga, all this mattered little. He was quite simply overwhelmed by the Riviera, its grandeur and its beauty. The glittering array of aristocrats and kings would have dazzled almost everybody, but for the young man from Bombay it provided a spectacle that was intoxicating and he fell so in love with it that he was determined to come back and share it. It was many years before he was to become part of the spectacle but that first impression of the Riviera remained with him until his death.

Much as he loved the Riviera, the Aga was also shrewd enough to realize that to make his mark he had to make an impression in London. In London, of course, he was better noticed than on the Riviera, though he was nowhere near being the celebrity he was later to become. *The Times* of the day carried no mention of the Aga's visit — the first mention of the Aga in England was not to emerge until 1906, in the very changed political circumstances in India. But he was showing welcome signs of becoming the sort of Muslim, the sort of Indian, the British wanted to encourage. As

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befitting India's status as the 'jewel in the crown', it was run by a special department called the India Office, headed by a Secretary of State for India who, almost invariably, sat in the Cabinet. As with most departments, the permanent official really ran the show and in the India Office then a trinity of officials held sway: Arthur Godley, the Permanent Under-Secretary of State, who had been there for very nearly twenty years; Sir William Lee Warner, a retired civil servant who while working in Bombay had acquired an almost fanatical hatred of Indian nationalists, particularly Brahmins; and S.A. Hirtzel, who would later serve as Private Secretary to John Morley when he became Secretary of State for India in the Liberal Government of 1906. The India Office kept a careful watch on Indians coming to England — they often prevented undesirable Indians from reaching English shores — and within a few days of his arrival the Aga made the short journey from the Albemarle Hotel in Piccadilly to the India Office in Whitehall to see Sir William Lee Warner and tell him of events in India.

As a teenager in Bombay, the Aga had become quite friendly with the Duke of Connaught, Queen Victoria's son and then a Bombay Army Commander. In London this friendship now provided him with an entrée into royal circles. The Prince of Wales made him a member of the Marlborough Club; Queen Victoria invited him to dine at Windsor Castle and, with the help of her Indian Secretary, presented him with something written in her own hand in Urdu and Arabic, and conferred on him the honour of the KCIE. There were the usual round of dinners, balls and garden parties — including watching Jeddah, a 100-1 outsider, win the Derby.

The Aga returned to Bombay in the autumn of 1898, to find his family embroiled in further violence. In August 1898, while he had been in Europe, Hashim Shah, a nephew, was shot dead by the steward of the Aga's house in Poona. The steward was tried and sentenced to transportation for life, but the murder provided fresh meat for those dissidents who claimed that violence was an essential backdrop to anything the Aga and his family did. As if to answer them the Aga decided on some fairly drastic action. His theory was that all this violence was due to the world his grandfather had created. The followers he had brought from Kerman had been increased over the years by others from various parts of the North-West Frontier provinces — and even some negro slaves from Africa. They numbered about 2,000, lived in the various houses that the Aga had acquired, were paid pensions and behaved in much the same feudal fashion to which they had been accustomed in their own countries. The Aga's answer was to deport a good many of them to the Persian Gulf, pension others off, and exile still others to remote hill stations and prevent them from ever coming back to Bombay.

All this was done with the help of the Bombay police, and the encouragement of Sir William Lee Warner in London and Lord Northcote, then Governor of Bombay. This operation took some time, but did the Aga bribe the Bombay police in order to get his way? The suggestion that the head of Bombay's CID and some of his subordinates were in the pay of the

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Aga was to be made within eighteen months of the start of Operation Clear Out. In March 1901, yet another group of the Khoja dissidents presented a memorial against the Aga to Lord Northcote. Describing themselves as an 'influential and respectable portion of the Khoja community', the petitioners alleged that they lived in fear of their lives. The petition itself contained a familiar, if well presented, tale of the first Aga Khan's arrival in Bombay, the various disputes within the community, and the numerous ways in which the first Aga Khan and his successor extracted money from his followers. In addition to Dasong, or a tenth of one's property or income that the follower had to give to the Aga, and one referred to by Justice Arnold, the petitioners explained, religious merit was related to the size of donations to the Aga: the more money a follower offered, the greater religious merit he accumulated. In addition to those who paid Dasongs, called Dasoondias, there were the Petandias, who paid fees on certain occasions. But the highest merits went to the Sarbandias, who virtually sacrificed everything to the Aga, including the clothes on their backs. It was this, alleged the petitioners, which resulted in hundreds of families, especially in Kathiawar, being thoroughly ruined and rendered homeless and penniless.

In a sense these dissidents were carrying on the fight that an earlier group had lost in Justice Arnold's courtroom, back in 1866. If the facts were familiar, with more than a touch of class warfare — the Aga Khan's followers were uniformly represented as superstitious and ignorant, the dissidents as educated, fit to take their place in British-Indian society — the overall impression was still chilling: the fanaticisms which the Aga seemed to inspire in his followers, the various gangs which they had formed in order to silence opposition and the assaults, even murders, that had been carried out against people who had dared to criticize the Aga.

But, though the dissidents could argue persuasively and were part of the new educated Indian classes, they had little political or economic power. As we have seen, just after Justice Arnold's judgement, the Aga had transferred all the property of the Jamat into his own name. The dissidents estimated that the third Aga's annual income was Rs 1.2 million (£120,000). Even if he didn't use some of it to bribe the Bombay police, he had sufficient political clout to ignore the petition as a trifling incident. The dissidents had no Robert Knight to argue their cause, and the Aga was becoming far too important to the British to be unseated by mere petition. The British in India were then in the midst of playing a great game with the Russians over Afghanistan and the North-West Frontier provinces. Some years before this, Sir Douglas Forsythe had led a mission to Jarkand and discovered that there were communities of Shias who acknowledged the 'Aga Khan of Bombay' as their spiritual head, sending regular tributes to him. As the great game progressed, it was useful for the British to locate friendly Shias in inhospitable, generally Sunni, North-West Frontier territory. In fact, as the petition arrived on Lord Northcote's desk, so did a request from the Foreign Department of the Government of India asking the Aga Khan to supply regular intelligence on Russian activities along the

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North-West Frontier province. The Aga, of course, was willing to oblige. If there was a contradiction in this, the Raj seemed not to mind. The complaints had come from just the educated Indians the Raj was meant to encourage, but the Aga, despite his feudal antecedents, had more strategic value. Almost exactly a year later, in March 1902, Lord Northcote in a confidential letter to Lord Curzon, recommended that the Aga's honours be upgraded from KCIE to GCIE. The Aga's intelligence agents had proved very useful in the great game and he deserved to be rewarded. Northcote's letter made no mention of the dissidents, or their requests. The dissidents, and the general public of course, knew nothing of the Aga's intelligence work but, in due course, they heard of fresh honours being granted to him. It was announced in King Edward VII's Coronation Honours List, and in the summer of 1902, the Aga was a guest aboard the King's yacht at the great coronation naval review at Spithead.

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The dissidents had urged that the Aga be made to live in Calcutta, which had been fixed as the Aga's permanent home. The dissidents did have their wish — if only for a time — and soon after his return to India in the winter of 1902, the Aga went to live in Calcutta. But this was no forced exile. Lord Curzon, then Viceroy of India, decided to appoint the Aga to the Imperial Legislative Council. This was a body packed with British officials but also including a few Indians, generally of the forelock-tugging type. The Council had no real powers — in any case it had an inbuilt Government majority — and the Viceroy's real authority derived from London. But it did allow some Indians to blow off a bit of steam. Indians were generally appointed to this Council after extensive lobbying by themselves or their friends, and the Aga's appointment was, perhaps, a reward for his intelligence work. Also, he fitted in neatly with that group of titled Indian collaborators which the Raj periodically appointed to the Council.

The Council was presided over by Lord Curzon, who had no doubts that he was the most superior of persons and who openly expressed his contempt for educated Indians. The Aga's term on the Imperial Council coincided with the rise of Gopal Krishna Gokhale, leader of the developing Indian National Congress. Though Gokhale was one of the few Indians Curzon admired, such was the distrust that had already built up between the rulers and the ruled that even Gokhale's reasoned, one is inclined to say loyal, criticisms of certain aspects of British policy in India procured anger and scorn. Over the next few years the Council was to hear some thundering speeches from Gokhale and, though he was hardly in a position to influence policy, he did voice the feelings — and the frustrations — of a great many educated Indians. The Aga played little or no part in this debate. His main interest was the subject of Imperial Troops and he devoted almost all his speaking time in the Council to this. The Aga was so involved in this subject that he deeply regretted having had only two years to serve on the Council. Curzon would only give him a two-year term and the Aga would later bitterly complain to friends that he was 'permanently muzzled'. (The Aga,

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The Aga Khan Mehalatee, Aga Khan I, who arrived from Persia with 100 horsemen in Afghanistan to seek refuge with the British in August 1841.

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Muhammed Shah, King of Persia, who was Aga Khan I's bitter enemy,

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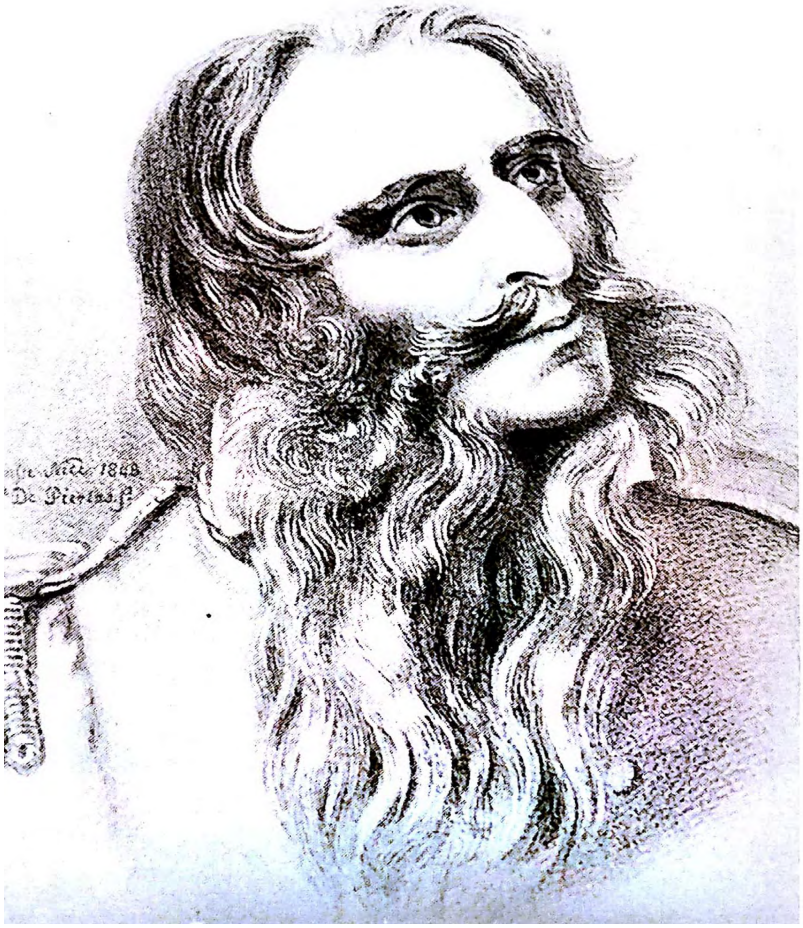
Henry Rawlinson, appointed Political Agent in Kandahar in 1840 who did much to sponsor the Aga I's acceptance in British India.



General Sir Charles Napie
who was attracted by the
but found his military and
intelligence services to be

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Aga Khan II. He succeeded his father when he was fifty, only to die four years later fr
pneumonia caught when out shooting.

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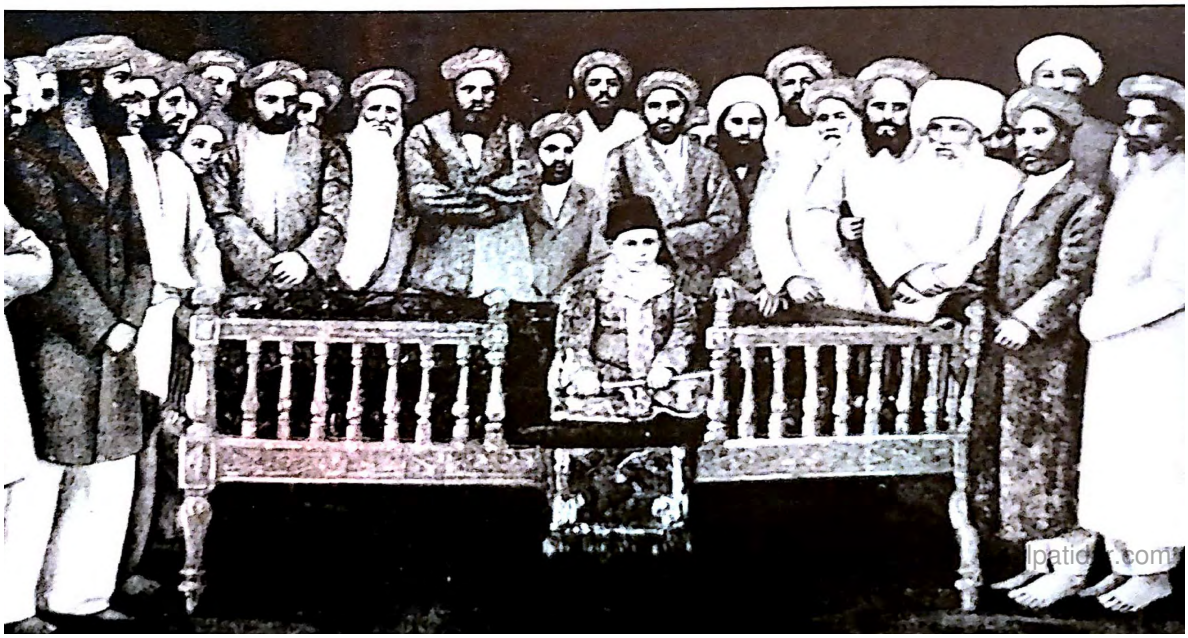
Aga Khan III ag
seven, with his
mother, Lady Ali
Shah.

Aga Khan III is
installed in Bomb
as the Imam of th
Ismailis, at the ag
of eight.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Aga Khan III, Princess Theresa, his second wife, and their first son who died in infancy. She was also the mother of Aly Khan.

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Left The Aga according to Spy, the cartoonist, appearing in *Vanity Fair* in November 1904.

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The Aga Khan III at Deauville in 1923.

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characteristically if mischievously, asserts in his autobiography that he did not accept a second term, when the evidence is quite clear that he desperately wanted one.) But his stay in Calcutta did lead to a most unusual friendship — with Sir Walter Roper-Lawrence.

When the Aga met Sir Walter Roper-Lawrence, some time in 1903, Sir Walter was already an 'old India hand', and in a very influential position. He had gone out to India as a civilian many years before, but just then he was Lord Curzon's private secretary, having held that position from 1898. Later on he was to become a member of the India Council that advised the Secretary of State for India in London. Not long after he had retired from India in 1928, Sir Walter was to write a book called *The India We Served*, a title which summed up his feelings about the British in India. In it, he would observe astutely, that the British in India were 'deracinated, without roots in India or in England.' Sir Walter was only five years older than the Aga, and in some ways his contemporary, but the friendship which developed between the two was not an equal one. The Aga came to depend on Sir Walter in a doting, almost pathetic way. Despite his appointment to the Imperial Council and the honours he had won, the Aga was very far from being a major political figure, or even a prominent one, either in India or in England. The years between 1903 and 1906 marked the Aga's political baptism and almost everything he did in public life was first cleared with Sir Walter. Yet the astonishing thing about this friendship is that, in public, neither man acknowledged it or even talked about it. The Aga in his *Memoirs* referred to a great many people, many of whom he knew only very casually, but did not mention Sir Walter Roper-Lawrence. And in *The India We Served*, Sir Walter does not once mention the Aga. We know of the friendship because of the letters the Aga wrote to Sir Walter during that period and which are now part of the Roper-Lawrence Papers in the India Office. Curiously, these consist almost entirely of letters written by the Aga to Sir Walter — none of Sir Walter's replies (but, perhaps, being the age before that of the universal typewriter or Xerox machines, copies were difficult). But a typed memorandum, presumably written by Sir Walter, indicates that he held the Aga Khans — I, II and III — in high esteem.

The Aga's letters reveal a developing public mind with an astonishing mixture of the curious, the timid, the naïve, interspersed with the occasional flash of the unexpected. Calcutta meant that for the first time in his life apart from the brief sojourn in Europe, the Aga was living away from his family. Because of his status as God to his followers life in Bombay always took on a certain feudal air, then there were his mother and the whole extended family of uncles, aunts, cousins and hangers-on. In Calcutta his life style was closer to that of most upper-class Indians with money. He acquired a house at 11 Elysium Row, a narrow, leafy lane in the heart of the European quarters of the city and, curiously, also containing the offices of the Secret Police.

Calcutta was then at the height of its glory, the capital of the Indian Empire and its winter season, from November to March, when most of the Imperial Council meetings were held, was said to be one of the most sought-

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after in the East. But the gulf between Indians and Europeans was probably wider here than anywhere else. Many of the great British clubs in Calcutta did not allow Indian members and, even among the English, there was a rigid class distinction. The English civil servants and top officials all round the country belonged to the Bengal Club, which not only shunned Indians but also English businessmen who ran Calcutta's and India's commerce. They were known derisively as 'Box Wallahs' and were members of a less prestigious, although perhaps livelier, Saturday Club. By virtue of the Bengal Club's prestige, it was almost considered the alternative seat of government and no building in Calcutta could be higher than the Bengal Club — a restriction that would apply until the end of the Raj in the 1940s.

Both the clubs were within walking distance of Elysium Row, but the Aga could be a member of neither. If he wanted to fraternize with mixed English and Indians, he could only do so by entertaining them at his Elysium Row house. But a few miles south, or east, of Elysium Row he would have found a very different society, a Bengali Society, which was in the middle of its most remarkable period, when, nurtured by English learning and literature, the Bengalis began to unveil their own literature, music, drama, painting and politics in a profusion that has never been matched. This Bengali Society was a bit too nationalistic for the Aga's liking and, in any case the Aga did not really see himself as an Indian.

As he would confess in a letter to Sir Walter, he still hankered after returning to Persia. True, he had been born in India and had never seen that country but his family were recent migrants to India and he hoped that in the 'next score of years' either a revolution or a call by the Shah would enable him to go back to Persia — even lead the country. Such thoughts, the Aga told Sir Walter, were not unnatural: after all he was a second generation immigrant whose father had arrived in India a mere forty years ago.

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The Aga knew that the call from Persia was a bit of a pipe-dream, and he freely confessed to Sir Walter that very likely his life would be spent like his grandfather and father, with sport and charity. But unlike his father and grandfather, the Aga could find no comfort in the feudal pleasures they enjoyed. They had never been to Europe, never felt the intoxication of the Riviera, compared to which Indian society, not surprisingly, appeared 'stuffy'. In fact the Aga was getting so bored with Orthodox Indian Muslim society that he began to grow careless. In December 1903, on a visit to Bombay, he called on the Governor, Lord Lamington, who had been quite shocked to learn that the Aga had disregarded the obligations that Ramadan imposed on Muslims. This caused a good deal of comment, and much offence in the Muslim community. Lamington regretted this. Although the Aga's influence had 'been useful', if he was to continue the good work for the British he had to be a good Muslim. The Aga, however, found all this a chore and told Lamington that he could hardly be bothered with Indian society. Everything about Europe, from its wine to its women,

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appeared exotic and desirable; the Aga had also developed a love for motor-car racing and could not wait to get back to indulge in his favourite pastime.

The British pattern in India was to work in the plains from November to March, during what was called the 'cold weather' season; and then travel to the hills to escape the heat. The Aga introduced his own personal variation by spending the summer back 'home' in England. (See illustration, page 102.) It was in 1904, on one such trip to England, that the friendship with Sir Walter was cemented. Sir Walter was now back in England as a member of the India Council. Suddenly he was called on by the Secretary of State to advise on a very serious matter. Some rather alarming allegations had been made about the Aga's character: we do not know what these allegations were. The Aga, in a letter to Sir Walter written almost a year later, would describe them as a 'serious charge' brought against his character. It might have been a charge of 'disloyalty to the British', or even a sexual misdemeanour. At this stage the Aga had in fact badly blotted his copy book with Lord George Hamilton, Secretary of State for India. Hamilton had tried to convince the Aga that the appointment of Curzon as Viceroy and Kitchener as Commander in Chief of the army in India would so overawe the Indians that any suggestion of a revolt against the Raj would be quickly nipped in the bud. The Aga rather daringly refused to accept this line completely and Hamilton thought of him as an 'uppity Indian' who had too much book-learning for his own good. Whatever it was, even a year later the Aga was extremely agitated about it. And he only seemed to have escaped the wrath of the Secretary of State through the good offices of Sir Walter. The Aga was so grateful that he promptly offered to finance one of Sir Walter's favourite schemes. Sir Walter was keen to counteract the anti-British, Indian Nationalist, newspapers by distributing pro-British papers widely throughout the country. India's vast size made — and still makes — national newspapers impossible, but the Aga promptly offered money and help to distribute papers in Bombay and Poona and tried to make similar arrangements with other Indian princes for distribution in their own areas, though nothing much came of it.

The Aga returned to India in early 1905, but this separation from Sir Walter only deepened the bond. The Prince of Wales was due to visit India in 1906, and the Aga was quite determined to be the most loyal of loyalists. A committee had been formed with the Aga as chairman to commemorate the occasion, and the Aga thought that the most fitting gift would be a statue of the Prince of Wales to be presented to the Victoria Memorial — that rather extraordinary monument to Queen Victoria which dominated central Calcutta. In a letter to Sir Walter, written on 10th April 1905, the Aga asked for advice that neatly illustrated the nature of the dependent relationship:

> ... I do not mind the cost, I think £500 will give us a very good statue but I do not know how to start the matter. Besides, will the project in any way be disapproved of by either HRH or the Viceroy? Whom am I to write to and make this offer to....? Naturally I am anxious to have the

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> artist who has the royal favour of the Prince and the King to the highest extent to execute the matter, and I wonder if you could kindly find out that, or shall I leave the choice of the artist to the Viceroy or, as art has no country, is there a foreign artist who is greatly appreciated by the Prince and the King and so would you recommend such an artist? I am frankly anxious to see such a work of art as would be worthy of the great person it represents, and shall ever remain a notable monument in Calcutta. I really want your direct advice on this matter after you have considered every aspect of it.... I am really to be entirely guided by your directions on this matter and please tell me whatever you may think and be quite certain *no* one but *myself* will *ever* know of any private matter you may mention. If you do not approve of this idea please tell me and though it is very dear I shall drop it.

Sir Walter was due to accompany the Prince on his visit to India and the Aga was very keen to arrange that the Prince should visit him at his home in Calcutta. By the winter of 1905, Sir Walter was able to reassure the Aga that an informal visit by the Prince to 11 Elysium Row was on the agenda. The Aga was now in a state of high excitement about the visit. But there were still two things worrying him. The letter to Sir Walter on 12th December 1905 again asked for advice. 'First, 5 pm is the usual tea hour and would it be right for me to request the Prince to have some tea when he arrives there?' The other matter was perhaps even more serious.

When the Prince's father, Edward VII, then Prince of Wales, had visited India in the 1870s, the third Aga Khan's grandfather, as we have seen, had stood before the prince's chair, despite Edward's request to sit down. He had done so in spite of a broken leg, arguing that this was a traditional Persian way to honour one's sovereign. The grandson now asked Sir Walter, 'I should very much like to stand before HRH while he is in my house paying an informal visit but, of course, if you consider that it would not be a correct thing to do, I shall exactly act according to your kind instructions.'

The Prince of Wales was due to visit the Aga on Monday, 1st January 1906 at about 5 pm, on his way back from the races at the famous Tollygunge Club. On the previous Saturday, 30th December, the Aga again wrote to Sir Walter:

> Will you kindly let me know about what time on Monday HRH will do me the honour of coming here. Will it be about 5 or near 6 after Tollygunge? I only want to know approximately so as to have the tea fresh and all the toast hot. I hope you will be pleased with the extreme simplicity and the absence of any formality here on Monday. I assure you that everything will be just as you told me to arrange and quite absolutely informal.

History doesn't record whether HRH found the toast at the Aga's place crisp enough and the tea sufficiently fresh — it is possible that despite all

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this he did not even visit 11 Elysium Row — but if the subsequent progress of the Aga is any guide, then such attention to detail did the young man no harm. And the young man now felt sufficiently bold to stretch beyond hot toast and tea into a more substantial Edwardian meal of politics and ideas. Twelve days after the visit of the Prince of Wales — on 12th January 1906 — the Aga wrote Sir Walter what he called a 'Statement of Politics.' It was a long, rambling piece which was remarkable as much for what it said in its seventeen handwritten pages, as an insight into the thinking of the twenty-nine-year-old. The Aga frankly confessed to Sir Walter that his political thoughts were those of an outsider — he saw himself as a Persian — and the happy accident of being a rich man with plenty of money and little to do:

> ... I am by nature one of those who love having a 'good time' and have many but varied keen interests absolutely unconnected with politics.... From time immemorial individuals like myself, of no ability but ample private means, and a position of little or no responsibility ... and with a mental curiosity which made them read and study [have had] ... leisure to reflect on the anticipated events proposed by the clever and much abler men of affairs who have neither the time nor the freedom to think of the future....

The Aga had certainly used his leisure to think deeply about Britain and India, though, even today, his ideas appear startling. Until he penned his Statement of Politics to Sir Walter, the Aga, at least publicly, was the most conventional loyal supporter of British rule in India. Generally a loyalist, apart from wanting British rule to continue for ever, tended to play down the influence of the budding Indian National Congress, and was totally confident that everybody in India was loyal to the Raj. The Aga broke with this by presenting a more pessimistic and alarming picture of both the Congress and India. In fact, this was to set a pattern for the Aga's politics over the next few decades. While publicly he toed the conventional loyalist line, privately he was always full of foreboding about the future. Now he told Sir Walter that the Raj was underestimating the Congress. The Congress was a fundamentally disloyal organization led by clever, educated people who realized that the gun and the bullet would not drive the British away. Their plans were much more Machiavellian: to sow the seeds of hatred against the English, the fruits of which would be reaped by their grandchildren:

> The Congress ... whatever the feelings of their individual leaders, is nothing but an organisation to train the people to hate England as the enemy of the Country. This is unpleasant but I fear it is true all the same. Above all, they realise that if they could only bring up two or three generations to believe that England was systematically bleeding the country to death, a day would come when at a time of international trouble and perhaps of naval or military disorder or disaster, England would lose

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India. It is true that they remember that they might find as masters the vanquishers of England, but from their point of view they hoped they would get good terms out of the other foreigners and above all such patriotic enthusiasm as to prevent the exhausted victors from setting up another empire. These are wild ideas today but are they so wild seventy or fifty years hence?

And having described the Congress campaign, the Aga went on to analyse — in very bleak terms — the Raj loyalists ranged against the Congress. Congress, the Aga warned, had already secured the educated Hindu, but their long-term plan for securing the Sikhs was working well; they might not succeed very well with the Rajputs — the legendary Indian warrior class — but then the Rajputs were uninfluenced by European ideas and the Congress worked best with those who were open to European ideas. The native Princes would also remain loyal, but to try and use them to stop the Congress was like trying to 'dam a flooded river with broken china pieces.' And the Aga was pessimistic, even of his own Muslims. It was 'impossible now for any really representative Mohammedan body to be openly hostile to the Congress,' argued the Aga. Not only were the Muslims accepting the Congress line on the British, as a wicked, enslaving foreign power, but in international terms they no longer saw England as the protector of independent Muslim states like Turkey, Persia or Afghanistan. These states which exercised an emotional pull on Indian Muslims were seen as beleaguered countries fighting a Christian power.

The Aga's view was so bleak that he couldn't even hold out much hope for the 'native army'. The army was being influenced by everything that was happening all round it and the recruitment policy for it was wretched. The British had stopped recruiting from the Mahrattas, where nationalist sentiments were running high, and had started recruiting Muslims from the frontier provinces. This, warned the Aga, could be dangerous as these Muslims

> are perhaps the most intensely Europhile of central and south Asiatic Mahommedans. They can at moments of trouble be made by astute agitators to take the view that England is the real enemy of the Muslim states. They are fanatical and sentimental and both these feelings are associated with their religion. To expect real loyalty from them at the hour of need is to rely on water from the mirage....

So far, perversely, the Aga had almost made a brilliant case for the end of British rule in India. He had chopped away almost all the pillars on which British hopes rested: forceful administrators sent out from England, old guard Indians who could isolate the minority of modern educated ones, and the unswerving loyalty of the Indian army and the power of the Indian princes. But, while the Aga was undoubtedly exaggerating for his own benefit, there was some merit in his analysis. His fears that the Congress ideas would have an effect in about forty years' time, or that British

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military disasters would help Indian independence, were not far off the mark. Remember, he was writing in 1906, and in 1947 — forty-one years on — the British did leave India, and the Second World War was a most uncomfortable time for the English in India. The Aga, of course, was not making a case for the removal of the British in India. He was shrewd enough to realize that without the British his own position as a putative Muslim leader was in considerable jeopardy. He may have hankered for Persia, but he had no realistic chances of going back there. His advancement lay with the continuance of British rule in India and with this in view, he made the most radical proposal.

The British, he told Sir Walter, could do one of two things: they could either use force to rule India — but being a sentimental people could not follow 'such a cold course for long.' The only alternative, the Aga argued, was to instil a deep sense of loyalty to Britain among the Indians. Fortunately the Indians, he believed, could never be made to acquire a European sense of nationhood. Like the French, they would never owe allegiance to a flag or an emblem, but the loyalty they could be made to have was to a person, to the King Emperor. Since he was too far away, the Aga suggested that a member of the royal family 'not in direct line of succession to the throne but also near the sovereign, and of a young age such as at present the Prince Arthur of Connaught, be appointed for a period of at least fifteen to twenty years as Viceroy.' The word 'Viceroy' had acquired certain unpopular and abusive connotations in India and he should carry the title of *Prince Regent* and would be a sort of constitutional monarch in India. He would be advised by an executive council headed by a Prime Minister — some senior English statesman in whom the English Cabinet of the day would have the fullest confidence. The Prince Regent would rule on behalf of the King Emperor, and the Prime Minister would be rotated every five years or so and would exercise executive power. The Aga thought that the trouble with the present system was that the Viceroy was both the ruler and the man who represented the King Emperor. When he got involved in political actions, people did not always separate his two roles. A Prince Regent who lived in India — though he would be allowed to go on holiday to Europe — would, like the royal family in England, unite all the various Indian classes and encourage the necessary social reforms and amelioration in the conditions of the poor that were so necessary, while the Prime Minister could get on with the task of actually governing the country.

Although the Aga had indicated right at the beginning of the Statement of Politics that he sought no personal gain — he was more than happy with the honours the British had given him — two of the special positions he wanted created seemed designed particularly for him. He wanted a special department to look after the Indian princes, headed by a notable Indian, and another Indian 'of tried loyalty and zeal' to be appointed to the Council which would advise the Prime Minister. Though he did not explicitly say so, both jobs seemed to be designed for his needs. He also held out a suitable bait for Sir Walter: expressing the hope that the Aga would have the pleasure of welcoming Sir Walter as the first Prime Minister of this new British set-up in India.

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It is not clear whether the Aga held out any realistic hopes of these proposals being implemented, or even considered. Sir Walter was certainly the right target to aim for — he was an influential member of the India Council, which was the body which would first have to vet any such radical proposals before they were considered by the Secretary of State for India and then, eventually, by the British Cabinet. There is nothing to suggest that these proposals went beyond Sir Walter's filing cabinet, but in later years some British officials certainly got the impression that the Aga was a bit of a political dilettante. As the Aga himself confessed to Sir Walter, he had the time, the money and the leisure to be a voyeur in politics and make a lot of proposals; but he rarely followed them up or did the hard work that was necessary to make them successful. The title 'Statement of Politics' suggests that the Aga saw it as his political creed, but if he did so he never referred to the entire Statement in public. He did discuss his 'Prince Regent' idea in *India in Transition* — a book which was published just after the First World War — but he never repeated his alarmist forecast of Congress's intentions, or his gloom-laden ideas about the Raj loyalists. And by the time he came to write his *Memoirs*, almost fifty years later, the Statement of Politics and Sir Walter had been completely forgotten. It was as if it had never happened. But then, that is a feature of the third Aga Khan's story.

Perhaps the Aga was putting down a marker for the future. The calibre of the Indians the Raj was attracting was not very high. Few of them had any original ideas, not even eccentric ones such as the Aga had, and the shrewder Raj officials freely conceded that educated Indians of calibre and intelligence were more often attracted by the idea of the Congress. The Aga could sense that there was a leadership vacuum to be exploited and felt a Statement of Politics would do no harm. Though the Statement came creaking with the genuflections that were almost obligatory on the part of any Indian supporter of British rule in India, it was still a considerable advance on what most loyalists were capable of. If Sir Walter circulated it to other officials, it could have done the Aga's influence no harm.

Four months after baring his heart to Sir Walter, the Aga was on his way to London. Summers in Europe were now becoming part of his life style, but this was a somewhat unusual trip. Just a week before he sailed on the SS *Egypt* in April 1906, the Aga met Lamington, Governor of Bombay. They spoke on a wide variety of subjects, some of them so confidential that Lamington, in writing about it to John Morley, who had just taken over as Secretary of State for India, urged him to keep them strictly to himself. The Aga warned Lamington that the Congress was bent on its mission of spreading disaffection, and that Indian students in England were planning to send emissaries into Indian districts to 'change and warp the minds of the Indian people against our rule.'

However, when the Aga boarded the SS *Egypt*, he found that one of his fellow passengers was Gokhale, leader of the Indian National Congress. Gokhale was going to England on a mission of propaganda and education.

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The Congress had set up a committee in London, composed of active, influential English liberals, and Gokhale, hoping to use the Liberal victory of 1905, was aiming to further the Indian cause. For Indians of this generation, everything best in English history had a liberal hue. The founder of the Congress had been the Liberal, Allan Octavian Hume; it had been founded during the Liberal Viceroyalty of Lord Ripon, and it was not unusual then for annual Congress sessions to conclude with 'three cheers for the Queen', meaning Victoria, or Gladstone. The first twenty years of the Congress's existence had coincided with almost uninterrupted Tory rule and Indians believed that lack of progress had been due to Tory intransigence. With the Liberals now commanding a huge majority in Parliament and with John Morley, Secretary of State for India, Gokhale was travelling to England full of optimism and hope that he could convince the India Office of the sensible proposals of reform and change that were necessary in India.

Given the Aga's views, and the feelings he had expressed to both Sir Walter and Lord Lamington, this ought to have been a very difficult journey. Instead it turned out to be very pleasant. The SS *Egypt* had sailed on 14th April. Writing from Aden on the 18th, Gokhale told his friends that he was thoroughly enjoying the journey and was quite happy to have the Aga on board, who was 'coming over to our way of thinking in politics more and more.' The Aga told Gokhale that he was delighted with Gokhale's plan to start the Servants of India Society, an educational society — and offered to contribute Rs 5,000 to it. He also invited Gokhale to stay with him in Switzerland for a month and improve his somewhat indifferent health. Indeed the Aga appeared to tell Gokhale what he wanted to hear, or perhaps Gokhale was rather naïve and impressionable, or the Aga very Machiavellian, but four days in a boat seems far too short a period for the leader of the Congress to think that the Aga's politics were the same as his.

The sea air may or may not have had an effect on the Aga, but his involvement with Gokhale was to take a bizarre, almost comical turn, when the two arrived in London. Gokhale's meetings with John Morley went so well that the Secretary of State promised to see the Indian as often as he wished and also proposed to invite him to the King's birthday party. But the trinity of Arthur Godley, Sir William Lee Warner and F.A. Hirtzel, now Morley's Private Secretary, who ran the India Office, found it truly alarming. As Hirtzel advised Morley, if Gokhale was to be invited to the King's birthday party, then 'he ought to be diluted with other natives.' The Aga, of course, was one of the most suitable of natives who could dilute Gokhale and in May 1906, Lee Warner summoned the Aga from Paris to come and meet the officials at the India Office, and John Morley.

At the meeting, the Aga told Lee Warner that it would be a splendid idea if the collaborators of the Raj could infiltrate Gokhale's proposed Servants of India Society: this would help get Gokhale away from political agitation onto the safer line of social reform. Lee Warner was quite simply horrified. He saw Gokhale's society, which aimed to unite Hindus and Muslims, as

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something that would ultimately prove seditious and, listening to the Aga expound how he and his friends could infiltrate Gokhale's society, Lee Warner was convinced that it was more than the sea air that had affected the Aga on his journey out to India. Somehow, he thought, the Aga had 'got into Gokhale's power, and was really playing his game.' The Aga was scheduled to meet John Morley, after his chat with the officials, but before he could do so Lee Warner went in and warned Morley that the Aga was hatching some bizarre plot.

Morley probably treated this as a characteristic reaction by his officials, and nothing more was heard of it. It certainly did not affect the Aga's position with the British, even if it illustrated the political tightrope he had chosen to walk. Within a few months, however, he was to experience the sweet joys such political high-wire acts could bring. 1906, as 1066 had been for another age, was to be an important year for the Aga Khan and, curiously, the setting was to be a small hill station in northern India.

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Chapter 7

1906 and all that

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Simla had much to celebrate in 1906. 1,170 miles away from Calcutta, in the hills of northern India, above Delhi, this middle-sized village had been converted by the British in the past half-century into a fair-sized town. It was the Anglo-Indian Olympus, the place which saw the most curious annual ritual ever performed by a ruling caste. Just before the hot season set in each year, the British — both sahibs and memsahibs — their servants, their guards, the traders who served them, and hangers-on of various assortments, and their precious files of course — left Calcutta.

The British had been coming to Simla every summer since the 1860s, and by 1906 there were more than 1,400 European dwellings, built on a series of ridges with the native town somewhat separate, of course. At the centre of this was the Viceregal Lodge, five storeys high, furnished by Maples of Tottenham Court Road, and looking like something that Lord Curzon's American wife thought might be appreciated by a Minneapolis millionaire. It was a place for theatricals: more Sunset Boulevard than Noël Coward — one Vicereine calculated that while she and her husband dined alone, nineteen servants waited in the passages, and in the hall below thirty-two men serenely went on playing in the band. In 1906 the theatricals were somewhat special. There was a new Viceroy, Lord Minto, who had arrived the previous winter and who had to be introduced to the elaborate rituals of Anglo-India. Here he could freely indulge his love for horses, leaving, so the bitchy gossip went, the administration to Lord Kitchener and the patronage to his bossy wife Mary; the actual theatricals and gay balls (to use the old-fashioned expression) was the preserve of the Mintos' three daughters who were quickly dubbed by Anglo-India as the 'Destroying Angels.' In this world of endless gossip, much talk of affairs (it is doubtful how many were actually consummated), dinners and parties, the truly theatrical event in the political long-term occurred towards the end of that summer.

The Raj's retreat was almost over — preparations were in hand for the descent to the plains — when on 1st October Aga Khan led a deputation of seventy Muslims to present a petition to the Viceroy. He was no stranger to Simla or the Viceregal atmosphere. Nine years earlier, it will be remembered, he had presented his 'salaams' to another Viceroy on the

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occasion of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, but that was the general sort of loyalty pledge the Raj traditionally sought and obtained from its supporters. Now the game had changed a bit, and the stakes were incomparably higher.

Seventy Muslims gathered in the elaborate ballroom that could actually accommodate 800. While the 'Destroying Angels' and Mary Minto went in by a side door to watch the fun, Lord Minto, dressed in his Viceregal robes and, accompanied by his staff, advanced up this huge, cavernous ballroom and took his seat on the dais. In front and below him stood the Aga, representing the Muslims who supported the Raj and now wanted their pound of flesh. In many ways it was the classic sort of 'Loyalist' memorial. Its heart was its loyalty to the Raj, and its guiding principle its belief that European institutions could prove highly dangerous for India. Those institutions were new, said the petitioners, and had to be applied with care, and if they were to be introduced at all, then the Muslims wanted safeguards to protect their rights and privileges. The Muslims, said the Memorial, were a significant minority: sixty-two million meant only one fifth of the total population of India but this, argued the petitioners, was more numerous than the entire population of any first class European power except Russia. The memorialists, however, were not just intent on securing a proper minority status in terms of number:

> We venture, indeed with your Excellency's permission, to go a step further and urge that the position accorded to the Mohammedan Community in any kind of representation, direct or indirect, and in all other ways affecting their status and influence, should be commensurate not merely with their numerical strength but also with their political importance and the value of the contribution which they make to the defence of the Empire; we also hope that your Excellency will in this connection be pleased to give due consideration to the position which they occupied in India a little more than 100 years ago and of which the traditions have actually not faded from their minds.

This was not so much an argument for minority status, it was an argument for a separate nation. The Muslims were saying that whatever democratic institutions were introduced in India by the British, they must always remember that the Hindus and Muslims had separate identities and should be treated separately; sentiments that the Raj heartily endorsed and found very useful. The rest of the petition was taken up with a plea for more 'Jobs for the Boys' (the Muslims wanted jobs in the Civil Service, and there had been Hindu judges in various High Courts in India, but no Muslims). The petitioners pointed out that qualified Muslims could easily be found and there were at least half a dozen signatories to the memorial itself who could qualify for judges. And if Indians were appointed to the Viceroy's Executive Council, it was hoped that more than 'One Mohammedan ... will be found in the country fit to serve with distinction....' Minto had already been coached by his officials about his reply to the Aga and his friends. The

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moment the Aga had stopped speaking, Minto rose to accept basically the central plank in the Muslim case.

Soon after the formal proceedings had finished, the Muslims and the Viceroy, joined by Mary and the 'Destroying Angels' had Viceregal 'tea' in the formal garden that a horticulturalist from England had laid out. One of the Aga's friends, overwhelmed by the whole occasion and the chance to be so close to the gods, went up to Mary Minto and expressed sentiments the Raj coveted so much. 'A hundred years ago,' said the Indian, 'Lord Minto came and saved our state. We cannot forget the gratitude we owe to his family. Now God has sent his descendant, not only to save Patiala but to save India, and our hearts are full of thankfulness.'

The Indians were not the only ones to be overwhelmed by the spectacle. In London, *The Times* thundered its approval. On 2nd October 1906, in one of its more asinine leaders, *The Times* saw this hotch-potch of a feudal petition as 'the only piece of original political thought which has emanated from modern times.'

For the Aga, all this was immensely gratifying, but the effort seems to have exhausted him for after he presented the petition he fainted — it is not clear whether this was in the garden during the tea, or elsewhere. He returned to Calcutta, where his doctors 'recommended me to go for a voyage for absolute mental rest' — and he decided to make a world tour to recuperate. And, while he does so, we may draw back from myth to examine the true facts.

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The background to the Simla delegation is as interesting as it is complicated. Given the strain the Aga must have been under and the importance of the event, you would expect him to wax eloquent on this aspect of his life. In fact he devotes a bare two pages to the whole affair in his *Memoirs*, presenting neither a clear description of the events nor, of course, of the private intrigues that lay behind the public theatricals. We get the expected condemnation of the Congress for its failure to accommodate the Muslims, the somewhat novel interpretation of the Memorial as a democratic advance, and the not unexpected suggestion of the Aga as the man largely responsible for it. We are dealing with that familiar creature, the 'Agafact', the Aga's version of facts that bear little or no relation to the true ones. We are also faced with the larger myth about the Raj's relations with Hindus and Muslims and the Aga's role in it; history as justification, rather than history as fact.

The British in India, far from wanting to unite the Hindus and the Muslims were always worried that such unity might come about. And, as the Aga's friend Lord Lamington would put it in a letter to John Morley, 'the real guarantees of our stay in India are as strong as ever over the caste system, the diversity of nationalities and creed and the lack of confidence and trust of one native for another.' Lamington was writing to Morley in April 1906, just as the Aga was getting involved with Gokhale and the India Office in his bizarre dealings. The British, moreover, having decided to

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open universities along English lines in India, now disowned the products which were emerging from these universities. It was, and remains, the greatest infanticide in intellectual history, disowning your own intellectual progeny. It is astonishing to consider how moderate those Indian leaders were. They wanted not freedom from the empire, or even secession or anything remotely like that.

The British were now set in a mould that saw every educated Indian as a dangerous radical. The mask may be that of a moderate, they argued, but behind that was the evil face of the Nationalist whose real aim was to remove the British from India. To British officials, the divisions in Indian society that Lamington relied on were to prove useful in thwarting Gokhale and his friends.

The divisions were real enough. Most of the educated Indians were either Hindus or Parsees. The Parsees were the remnants of the old pre-Islamic inhabitants of Persia. Twelve hundred years ago, as Islam swept through Persia, some of the Persians, followers of the ancient prophet Zoroaster had taken sanctuary in India. A small, tight community — much given to in-breeding — had survived and prospered and was ideally suited to take advantage of British education and influence. Among the Hindus, Bengal — the leading province of that time — led the way, but for Muslims it was not so easy.

Of all the communities in India, the Muslims had the most ambivalent relationship with the British. The others, like the Hindus or the Parsees, were subject races — they could be scorned or patronized. The British were always aware that they had succeeded the Muslims as rulers of India. Before the traumatic Indian Revolt of 1857, British rule in India — between 1757 and 1857 — was a most curious form of leasehold tenancy. Though the British actually ruled India from their headquarters in Calcutta, the Mogul emperor still resided in Delhi, despite his powers being almost totally fictional. The revolt of 1857 changed all that. An attempt was made to restore Bahadur Shah, nominal Mogul emperor, with some of the powers that his great predecessors had. Though the old Hindu aristocracy was deeply involved with the Muslims in this attempt, the British saw the revolt as a Muslim, Mogul attempt to win back what they had lost the previous century. Before 1857 British historical writing on India had coupled respect for Mogul achievements with a certain piety about its sad end. Now the ideologists of the Raj argued that the fanaticism which was inherent in Islam, its call for Jihad — holy war — against the Infidels, meant that all Muslim subjects would be rebellious. The Ulema — Islamic clergy — were certainly inclined to be rebellious, seeing the pork-eating Christian British ruling class as an anathema to any orthodox Muslim.

Muslims had arrived in India as conquerors, ruled India for 600 years before the British arrived, and many of the Hindu élite remembered with bitterness the defeat of their men and the humiliation of their women. Though the Muslims formed twenty to thirty per cent of the population of India by the early part of the twentieth century, only a small fraction of this derived from the conquerors who had arrived in the Middle Ages. The great

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majority of them were converts from the wretched lower castes of the Hindus. Most of them were poor and had exchanged their miserable Hindu existence for just as miserable a Muslim one, except that Islam promised a theoretical equality which Hinduism denied. It must be stressed that the British, the Indian Nationalists and the Muslims were all very élitist. The Indian English that Macaulay wanted to create was not meant to cover the entire country. He wanted 'a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions we govern.' And while Gokhale and the other Congress leaders no doubt thought that they spoke for India, a mass Indian National Congress would have to await the arrival of Gandhi.

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This small, but necessary detour forms the backdrop of Simla — 1906. By then the clash between the British, the Nationalist and the Muslim élite of Sir Syed Ahmed's disposition, had reached a critical stage. As we have seen, Gokhale had been to London in the summer of 1906 to lobby John Morley on behalf of some Congress proposals for change. He had not been entirely successful, but in his budget speech — on 20th June 1906 — Morley offered a few crumbs of comfort: reform of the Imperial Legislative Council, allowing for some elected representatives. But even this limited concession alarmed the Muslim leaders. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan was dead but his mantle had fallen on a Northern-Indian landowner called Nawab Mehti Ali Khan who preferred to be called Moshin ul Mulk. Nine days after Morley's speech, Moshin ul Mulk was in touch with W. A. J. Archibold, principal of Aligarh College and an old friend of Sir Syed. Gokhale and the Indian Nationalists derived comfort from Liberal England, but Archibold was probably part of the older English tradition which distrusted parliamentary governments and certainly did not think it made much sense in an India which, he contended, was not a nation. Moshin ul Mulk warned Archibold that Gokhale's success had had a big impact on educated Muslims; if elections to the Council were held, the Hindus would not only win an overwhelming majority but educated Muslims would be seduced by the Congress. Moshin ul Mulk wanted to send a deputation to the Viceroy to present a memorial on the rights of the Muslims, based not on election but on appointment.

Archibold was already in Simla, like the rest of the Raj, escaping the heat of the plains and in an ideal position to act as middleman. Though Lord Minto had only recently succeeded Lord Curzon as Viceroy — this was his first summer in Simla — Archibold had good contacts with influential officials close to Minto, in particular James Dunlop-Smith, Minto's powerful private secretary. Although it was unprecedented for the Raj to receive political demands from one section of the Indians, Archibold had fertile ground to work on.

Minto quickly agreed to Archibold's and his officials' recommendations and by September 1906, various Muslim landlords and other leaders had begun to gather in Lucknow to hammer out the exact wording of the Memorial. This again was largely the work of Moshin ul Mulk, though he

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relied heavily on Harcourt Butler, the Commissioner of Lucknow and an intimate of both Moshin and Dunlop-Smith. Harcourt Butler despaired at ever agreeing on a common Muslim Memorial. No two Muslims seemed to agree with one another, and most were more interested in getting appointments rather than seats on the Council. Numerous copies were produced, endless drafts were changed and, much to Harcourt Butler's horror, Moshin ul Mulk provided no sort of leadership. He often did not know what was happening, tried to please all and, beyond an elemental hatred of Hindus nothing united the Muslims.

It was this that appears to have made the Aga their leader. So far he had played no part in either organizing the Memorial, or even lobbying for it. As we have seen, he had spent the summer of 1906 in Europe. But now, as the Aga rather mysteriously puts it in his *Memoirs*, 'Friends in India wrote' and told him what was going on. Presumably this was Moshin ul Mulk, and he suggested that the Aga lead the deputation. It was certainly clever of Moshin to let the Aga take the centre stage, but why did he do it?

What really swung the leadership for the Aga was his supposed closeness to the British. Though Minto hardly knew him and had met him only once before for a quick chat, the Aga had established something of a reputation as a teacher's pet. There were undoubtedly richer and more illustrious Muslim names, but few of them had the essential English airs and graces that the Aga had acquired. His wealth, his travels in Europe, his Anglicized manner, had all established his reputation as 'one of the most advanced Mohammedans'. Muslims, like all Indians, suffered from a deep inferiority complex regarding their English rulers. To them, the Aga seemed one of the few Indians who could converse with these 'sahibs'. The English could occasionally sneer at the Aga, as Minto did after he met him as a 'smart young man about town' and almost a 'denationalised Eastern', but he was still socially more acceptable to the English then than high-ranking Indians who appeared alien and remote.

The Aga was quick to seize his chance. Soon after the Simla meeting he learned that Lady Minto was very keen to hold a fancy garden fête in Calcutta in the approaching winter season. The Aga lobbied all the other Muslim leaders to support Lady Minto's ideas and himself contributed Rs 7,500 towards it to get it going. There was a certain amount of self-interest in this generosity for the Aga wanted introductions from the Viceroy to several foreign dignitaries in order to smooth his forthcoming world tour.

Before he left Calcutta on his world tour, however, he laid out plans that were to lead to the development of a separate Muslim party. The Aga had convinced his fellow Muslims that they needed to form a permanent Committee that could ensure that the objects mentioned in the Memorial were fulfilled. In the classical absentee political style of leadership, which the Aga was to use with great success over the years, he regretted that his health would not permit him actually to work on the formation of a Committee. That would be left to 'my old friend Nawab Moshin ul Mulk who is a most loyal and zealous Mohammedan.'

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The Aga, having apparently done his duty, set out on his world travels.

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Within two months of the Aga's letter, the All India Muslim League was born at Dacca, now capital of Bangladesh. If Moshin ul Mulk was the father of the Simla deputation, the League's formation at Dacca was due largely to the efforts of the Nawab of Dacca, an extravagant spendthrift who was soon to be grateful to the British for rescuing him from bankruptcy.

The Aga actually heard news of the Dacca event in San Francisco, where he had arrived after a long trip through Malaya, Singapore, China and Japan. It was leisurely travel, sampling the delights of the P & O liners and, helped by Lord Minto's introduction, the Aga had met the Emperor of Japan, the great Mikado — who had converted Japan in just forty years from a medieval group of islands to a great industrial power. San Francisco itself was a bleak experience, for the Aga arrived there just after the city had been ruined by its great earthquake and not a single shop was seen to be open.

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Chapter 8

Smart Man About Town

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For the first twenty years of his life the Aga shuttled between Bombay and the small hill stations round it. In 1898, as we have seen, he discovered Europe. This was to have a profound impact on him; none more so than the European idea of travel. Before the Aga, even well-off Indians rarely travelled a great deal. Indians, or for that matter Asians, did not see travel in the same terms as the Victorian Englishman or nineteenth-century European. The idea of travel broadening the mind would have astonished them. To them home was not only wonderful, it was paradise. The Mogul Emperor, discovering the beautiful valley of Kashmir, declared 'if there be paradise, then this is it, this is it.' And long centuries of Asian insularity — one reason for the ultimate fall of the old Asian civilizations — had bred the conviction that 'foreign' was an irrelevance. The Indians had not, of course, gone to the extent of the Chinese in believing that all foreigners were barbarians — their history would have militated against that. They had been conquered so often, and had had to accept so many foreign rulers, that they could not very well scorn them.

The Aga was one of the first Indians to realize the PR possibilities of travel. Unlike the great European travellers, he did not keep a diary — or if he did, it hasn't been discovered or disclosed — but he could immediately sense how useful travel to distant places could be. It added to his mystique, it spread his name, and it did no harm to his reputation with his community or his fellow Indians. They read about his meetings with various people and felt a certain sense of awe. For a superstitious, ritual people, imprisoned by ancient customs and taboos, the reports of one of their own meeting the great and the good of the world brought much needed romance and vicarious thrills to their mundane, desperate lives. And the Aga was by now shrewd enough to exploit this to the full.

The present 1906 world tour of the Aga was undoubtedly the most ambitious since 1899, when he had visited various parts of the world. In August 1899 the Aga, on his way back from Europe, had visited Zanzibar. He had done this in some style. Before his arrival in East Africa, his followers had spread the word that the Aga had recently been to and conquered England, Paris, Munich, the Riviera and North Italy. When he arrived in Zanzibar, his followers furnished him with a large town house

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and another house outside the city with a considerable garden — and provided him with the usual ample tributes which the German Consul General estimated at at least Rs 200,000/250,000. The Aga made an immediate impression. He spoke fluent English, Persian and several Indian languages — yet dressed in the most up-to-date modern European fashion, apart from an imitation Persian hat. The German Consul General was intrigued by the calm, serene way in which the Aga accepted the tributes of his followers. The Consul General was also very curious to know what the Aga got up to with his female followers. He learned that while the men visited his house in the morning, the afternoon was reserved for the women and the girls and, reporting to Berlin, he wondered how far the Aga made use of his 'privileges' when he was visited alone by the women and the girls.

Like his grandfather, the Aga's basic tie to his community was money. His second visit to Africa in 1905 was because of attempts by the French authorities in Madagascar to tax him on the money paid to him by his devotees. Something like Rs 200,000 per year was at stake (£20,000 — a large sum in those days) and the Aga was worried that the French attempt would be copied by the Germans. The third Aga Khan's approving biographers have presented this visit as a humanitarian visit 'to bring the benefits of Western civilisation' to his backward East African community. This seems to have resulted in the formation of a worldwide Ismaili organization that would report back to the Aga on the doings of his devotees and the formulation of the first Ismaili constitution — issued in Zanzibar on 9th September, 1905 — but not printed until 1922. But the constitution itself seems to have merely clarified the Aga's absolute power over his community, and it is difficult to assess how much the progress of the East African community owed to the Aga's direct influence and how much to their own initiative. The Khojas in East Africa were generally a small, well-knit community of prosperous businessmen who caused little or no problems to the authorities who, in turn, valued the Aga's tremendous influence over them. It was this that so impressed the German Consul General and, coached by him, the Kaiser decorated the Aga with the Royal Prussian Order of the Crown (First Class) on a visit to Berlin. It was a perfect illustration of how a man with a small, but secure, following could use his position to project a much bigger image — the Aga role at its best.

The Aga was aware of the limitations of his own power. Simla may have made him a spokesman for the Indian Muslims, but he was not yet overall leader of any kind. It had been demonstrated to him by a small but significant event early in 1906. Turkey, the greatest Muslim power, and its Sultan, had no great love for the Aga's Ismailis. For some years, the Aga's followers in Syria had been persecuted and, some time in 1906, a group of them were arrested in Damascus and tried on the charge of spying against the Sultan.

The Aga also feared that the new Shah of Persia might follow the example of the Sultan of Turkey, and with the sort of flamboyance of which his grandfather would have approved, told a Foreign Office official, 'Supposing all of us were gone? I wish, for the sake of my followers, that I

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gave warning.' But again the Foreign Office found that it could not help the Aga — instances that illustrated his limited political stature.

The Aga must have pondered such matters as he arrived in New York that January of 1907. In New York, everybody was talking about what newspapers called 'the crime of the century'. H. K. Thaw, the eccentric son of a railway magnate, was on trial for his life for the murder of architect Stanford White, a successful designer of skyscrapers and a highly original seducer of women. Thaw, a man given to violent rages, had shot and killed White in a New York restaurant when he heard that his wife Evelyn had once been the mistress of White. Two years before, in the summer of 1905, the Aga had met Evelyn in London and had quite liked her, before he was warned of her husband and his violent tempers. Now the Aga watched the trial with 'grim but bewildering fascination' — no doubt thanking his lucky stars that he had not gone any further with Evelyn.

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Chapter 9

The Absentee Leader

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Leaders of political parties in British India had a dual role. They had to lead and organize their parties in India, but they also had to look to London: to persuade, to cajole, to plead. It was not until the advent of Gandhi and the emergence of a Congress party which had a mass following, that the London end became relatively unimportant. Gokhale visited England quite often and so did a good many other Indian leaders. However, the Aga brought to the leadership of Indian Muslims a wholly singular approach. Though the other leaders visited England, from 1907 the Aga spent so much time in England that he could be said to be a *visitor* in India. He would leave India round about April and be in Europe until September or October, before returning to India via some other place. This meant that he was often in India for no more than two or three months a year.

This probably explained why the Muslim League developed hardly at all in the early years of its existence. In fact, the very first annual session held in Karachi in December 1907 agreed that the maximum membership of the League should be a mere 400. During the years of the Aga's presidency, the League made so little impact that the accepted channel of Muslim feeling remained the local Muslim Anjuman. It was such traditional Muslim organizations that voiced opinion about Government proposals, while the League remained shadowy and blurred. It was not until the Aga had given up the presidency and Mohammed Ali Jinnah, a member of the rival Ismaili Bohrah community, entered Muslim politics that the League acquired a certain wide political currency. It was only then that the League began to resemble a Western political party.

For the Aga however, all this, far from being a drawback, was actually an advantage. The presidency of the League provided him with a useful title. He generously supplied funds for its existence and used it to do what he wanted most and knew how to do best; act as a propagandist in government circles in London. Just as in India the Aga had relied on Nawab Moshin ul Mulk, in London he teamed up with Syed Ameer Ali, a barrister and former judge of the Calcutta High Court. The Aga had met Ameer Ali while he was a member of Curzon's Imperial Legislative Council in Calcutta and the Aga both respected and coveted Ali's intellect and learning. For some time Ali had wanted to set up a London branch of the All-India Muslim League to

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counter the activities of Gokhale's English Liberal friends. The Aga was more than happy to finance Ali. In April 1908, the London branch of the All-India Muslim League was opened at 42 Queen Anne's Chambers, Westminster, with Syed Ameer Ali as its first president. While Ameer Ali provided the bullets, the Aga fired the shots in what he called in his *Memoirs*, 'guerilla warfare, whose aim was to keep up to the mark.' This warfare was to make sure that the gains won in Simla were not lost in London. And the Aga and Ameer Ali had the advantage that they knew what the mark was — the strengthening of the orthodox Muslim community — while the others, like Gokhale, did not.

The guerilla campaign was to lead to a legend that became part of Indian political folklore. The Hindus did all the fighting to get the British to concede a political point, but just as the British were ready to concede it, the Muslims came along and stole the honours. On the face of it, Gokhale should have had immense advantages. He got on well with Morley, despite the suspicion of the India Office officials, and it was his orchestrated efforts that had forced the British to concede reforms. But Gokhale and the Congress had not only alienated the Muslims, they also underestimated them. In the end, as his biographer said, 'he seems to have been overtaken by events rather than shaping them.' Such was the skill of the Aga and Ameer Ali that for a long time Gokhale did not even know that a battle was going on.

The initial battle was actually won by Gokhale. When Morley announced his proposal to the House of Lords on 17th December 1908, he suggested that the proposed election to the Council would be based on joint electorates and proportional representation. The proposals had been blessed by officials in India and Britain, and Morley expected that there would be no criticisms. But the Aga and Ameer Ali were going for the jackpot: separate electorates, and their PR job was so successful that *The Times*, Tory Members of Parliament and the Anglo-Indian press attacked Morley's proposals. The Aga was very adept at this PR game. In his meetings with the press, or MPs, he would tell them that the Muslims were actually fighting England's battles. It was not impossible for the Muslims to coexist with the Hindus, an *entente* between Islam and Hinduism was possible. But where would that leave the Raj? By pressing for large separate treatment for Mohammedans, the Muslims were actually ensuring that the British Raj continued.

It was a skilful line and it had Morley rattled; the Conservatives had a big majority in the House of Lords and this could make the passage of the Bill difficult. Morley turned to those old Indian hands, Lee-Warner and his life-long friend Sir Alfred Lyall; they both recommended that he should do something to please the Aga and Ameer Ali. On 27th January 1909, Morley received a Muslim league deputation headed by Ameer Ali (it is not clear if the Aga went too), and listened to the skilful presentation; a Muslim member on the Viceroy's Executive Council, separate electorates and representation for the Muslims in the legislatures, based not on population but 'on its political importance.'

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This was a highly original, novel presentation of an ancient anti-democratic idea. Morley was trapped. He had introduced his draft proposals to the House of Lords in December 1908 and he had assured them that this was not the first step towards setting up a parliamentary system in India. If Indians were agitating for a parliamentary form of government then he, Morley, would have nothing to do with it. He desperately searched for a way out, aware that 'in picking up Muslamans we do not drop our Hindu parcels.' But Morley made such a botch of it that he seemed to be promising the Muslims even more than they wanted and the Aga and Ameer Ali, sensing victory, now demanded that they had separate electorates not only for the Council elections but for all local bodies, universities, special constituencies and chambers. The Muslims were a separate nation and they ought to be treated separately in all walks of life. This was, of course, no more than a typical bargaining point. The Aga and Ameer Ali did not expect separate electorates to be extended that far, though the proposals alarmed Minto and he sent a Muslim leader to London to try and restrain the Aga and Ameer Ali.

Minto need not have worried. For a start, the two Muslims had played their part well. The actual drafting of the recommendations was left to the Raj's civil servants and they saw to it that not only was the Aga's and his friends' victory secured but, in fact, elaborated. The 'reforms' did little to change the autocratic nature of the Raj, but such was the weight given to upper-class Muslims, that educated Hindus found their majorities in numbers of population converted into small minorities in terms of Council seats. And the Aga, having secured his victory, now played the moderate with great success. Privately, he may have alarmed Conservative MPs with what might happen if the Muslim demands were not met, now in public speeches he urged his followers to support the Government and ensure that moderation and the constitutional way was respected in India.

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But the strain of all this had begun to tell on his health. Early in 1909, the Aga began to complain that he was feeling ill and his doctors ordered a complete period of rest in a nursing home. It was not clear what his illness was; though always a large man, it is possible it was connected with his considerable weight. By early February 1909, he was sufficiently ill not to be able to attend a luncheon held in his honour by Ameer Ali at the Westminster Palace Hotel. Guests had been told that he would make a special effort to leave the nursing home for an hour or two and speak at the luncheon but they had to be content with a letter written by him and read out at the meeting. In the end the doctors recommended the familiar cure: the South of France, and the Aga was happy to follow their instructions. For as it happened, the Aga's celebrated love for *La Belle Epoque* had found sharp focus in a nineteen-year-old Turin girl who had just arrived in Monte Carlo to join the Casino Ballet.

If a single place dominated the Aga's life even more than the Ritz Hotel (with which his name will always be associated), it was that small, yet

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influential square called the Place du Casino in Monte Carlo, dominated by the magnificent edifice of Hotel de Paris, which in the winters before the First World War was the centre of what was called 'gay' European Society.

One evening in January 1908, a group of dancers of the Monte Carlo Ballet were sitting on the benches in the Casino garden. They had just finished their performance and were watching the parade of the bejewelled and the elegant, when an English journalist came up and spoke to one of them. The one he chose was calléd Theresa Magliano — or rather Ginetta, as she herself liked to be called. He said that a gentleman was very much in love with her, very rich, could give her everything, and tomorrow he would be waiting for her by the kiosk outside the Casino; he would make himself known to her. It was romantic, alluring and for young Theresa quite overwhelming. The next morning, as the dancers went past the kiosk on their way to morning rehearsal at the Casino, Theresa detached herself from her friends and walked towards a man who had been staring at the dancers for some time. As Theresa came close, the man took her hand and kissed it. The Aga Khan had met the first great love of his life. Suddenly, the Aga who had shown no interest in the ballet watched every performance; the Monte Carlo Casino had no more devoted admirer, and every night Theresa received a bouquet of flowers.

After a month the Aga had to leave for London — and the setting up of the Muslim League office there — but before he did he promised to return, and presented Theresa with gold links and a gold chain that he hoped would chain her to him. He returned in the spring and, according to his *Memoirs*, took Theresa to Egypt where they were married in Cairo in accordance with Muslim law.

Once again we are faced with that familiar phenomenon, the 'Agafact'; the Aga rewriting history to make for a smoother, more respectful biography. The Aga did not actually marry Theresa until his son Aly Khan was eleven years old, in 1923. The Muslim marriage which he claimed he had contracted in Cairo was, as revealed in his will, a 'muta marriage' — a form of temporary Muslim marriage that had been allowed in Islam by the prophet Muhammed in the early years of the religion. For most Muslims, muta marriage is regarded as adulterous, a sister of harlotry. Islamic authorities say that the chief object of such a marriage is not the establishment of a household, or even procreation, but the chance of providing a man with a wife when he is away from home. It was practised in pre-Islamic Arabia and, though Muhammed had banned it, as Islam spread through the Arab world and the Islamic warriors conquered in the name of Allah, he sanctioned muta marriages as a means of providing relief for his men who had to leave their wives at home while they fought for God and the green flag.

Ismailis, as we have seen, had their own practices, but a writer in the *Aga Khan Diamond Jubilee Souvenir Book 1945* would claim that 'muta ... is according to Ismaili Law altogether unlawful.' The Aga, as spiritual God of the Sect, could make his own laws — and in his case his apologists have suggested that he did. He could have sanctioned such a marriage and this is

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what his apologists have always claimed. Yet it all sounds very peculiar. All he had to do was to declare three times to his first wife, Shahzadi, 'I divorce thee', and then pass a decree legalizing his own muta marriage, but even Willi Frischauer, the Aga's latest hagiographer, who accepts that he could do this, does not really believe that he did.

In the spring of 1908, he moved Ginetta to a suite in the Hotel de Paris. She finished the season at the Casino and never returned to the ballet. Next year her son was born, named Mohammed Mahdi but known to his mother as Giuseppe. By then the Aga had installed them comfortably in a villa. To the world Theresa Magliano was still 'nubile' — unmarried — and this is what it said on Mahdi's birth certificate, but if the Aga was delighted with his son this was soon cut short. (See illustration, page 103.) When Mahdi was eighteen months old he contracted meningitis and died.

Theresa returned to Turin and it was there, at 5 pm on 17th June 1911, that another son was born to her. It was a difficult birth, the child had to be delivered by forceps and Theresa suffered. She suffered probably even more when the Turin authorities described Aly's birth on the birth certificate as 'from the union of Theresa Magliano, unmarried, twenty-two years old, living on independent means, here in person as a co-declarant with His Highness the Aga Khan, son of the late Aga Ali Shah, thirty-four years old, born at Karachi (British India), living at Monte Carlo, was born a male baby to whom was given the names of Aly Salomene.'

The child was a bit sickly but had all of Theresa's relations to love and nourish him. And it was some weeks before the Aga arrived in Turin to see his son and the woman who had borne his child. Then it was 23rd January 1923, when Aly was eleven years old and on his first visit to Bombay that his parents married again according to 'the permanent form of marriage' as the Aga's will put it. The will also revealed that the divorce from Shahzadi had not taken place until 8th December 1926, one week after Theresa Magliano had died. The temporary nature of the 1908 muta marriage can be guessed from the fact that, according to the will, the muta marriage's period had been fixed at fifty years, and a dowry of 10,000 francs ($2,000) was payable to Theresa.

We can understand why the Aga would wish to rewrite history — a common enough urge. But why did he not divorce Shahzadi in 1908 or, if he had indeed married Theresa according to conventional forms of marriage, not declare it to the world then? Why wait almost fifteen years for the world to be aware of his Italian wife? One explanation provided by the Aga's apologists was that 1908 was a very bad time to announce the end of his marriage to Shahzadi. It was an arranged marriage, it had not worked and Shahzadi had grown fat; so fat that a reinforced chair had to be carried about for her to sit on. She was, in any case, a woman from the feudal past which the Aga wished to disown — a woman of the purdah who never saw the world except in the enclosed, suffocating fashion that existed behind the closed curtains of the Eastern harem.

There was another complication: Haji Bibi, a widow and a sister of Shahzadi. As we have seen, Haji Bibi's and Shahzadi's father, Aga

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Junghishah, and his son were killed in Jeddah while they were returning from Haj in 1896. Ten years later Haji Bibi filed a case against the Aga in Bombay which was to raise many issues and was not settled until September 1908. Justice Louis Pitman Russell, in his judgement, described how the case raised 'no less than 128 issues ... and the suit itself attained the distinction of having taken up the longest time on record in these courts.' Though Justice Russell found for the Aga on all the counts, this was clearly not the best moment to inform Haji Bibi's sister, Shahzadi, that the Aga Khan was divorcing her — and had found an Italian woman with which to replace the daughter of Junghishah.

There may have been another reason. In 1908, the Aga was at the height of his political influence. He still had high political ambitions, not only of leading the Indian Muslims but of leading the Muslims of the world. And in British India, a marriage between a British Indian subject and a European was a grave matter. Racial arrogance was now part of the Raj. Marriages between Indians and English were rare and frowned upon. The Indian Maharajahs and Nawabs were not encouraged to acquire English or European wives. But for the Aga in 1908 to do so had its disadvantages. In 1923, the Aga's political ambitions were realistically over. They were to surface again a little later — quite fortuitously — and of course he never entirely gave them up, but by that time he had withdrawn, or been made to withdraw, from a very active Indian political role. But even then, he kept his marriage to Theresa very quiet and the marriage ceremony of 1923 was shrouded in mystery. There were two English witnesses, one of them Sir Stanley Reed, former editor of the *Times of India*, and years later he would still not provide the details of how the Aga got married.

Perhaps all the political, and even religious, considerations might have been overcome had Theresa really been the only woman in his life. Though he was fond of her and provided for her, the Aga's roving eye had settled on a couple of other Western women. Within a year of meeting Theresa, the Diaghilev company was to come to Monte Carlo and two of its dancers were to catch the Aga's attention. He coveted one of them — but he never secured her — and the other he made his mistress for some time. There had, of course, never been any shortage of women in the Aga's life. Since childhood he had grown up in the company of them, but these were generally captive women; women of the Janana. They could be beautiful, they could be attractive, even very sexy, and they were all freely available to the Aga. His followers would have done anything for him. But as the Aga moved to Europe, it seemed to him that the women of the race and colour he had grown up with did not have that sense of freedom, that air of abandon that he found so fascinating in white, Western females.

Also, these Western women had to be courted, to be lured to his den. There was something in the challenge of the chase which invigorated him. Colour, probably, played a part too. He had grown up in an Indian and Asian society that was irredeemably racist. A fair woman was considered a beautiful woman — and some fair Indian women can be like light-skinned Europeans. It was not surprising that the Aga liked his women to be very

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white and, apart from Shahzadi, he would never have any involvement with women of his own race. The whiter they were, the more the Aga seemed to covet them.

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In a sense, the double personal life — a dutiful wife in Bombay, a young Italian mistress in Europe — matched the double political life: while the people he was supposed to speak for lived in India, the Aga himself did much of his speaking from London. In the years since the Aga had told Lamington that he found Bombay society stuffy, nothing much had changed to modify his opinion. Just as the women in the South of France seemed so attractively free and alluring compared to a dutiful, fat wife in the closed family world of Bombay, so it seemed much more attractive to the Aga to be spokesman for his people in London rather than actually organizing them back in India. In any case, his type of politics did not need a great deal of organizing in the modern political sense. In India, there was his mother whom he respected rather than loved and although his followers treated him as God, even that was a bit of a burden. In London, on the other hand, being a God of distant people and being rich brought magic, mystery and fun. In 1903, Gertrude Bell had attended a dinner in London. She would later describe to her cousin, Edward Stanley:

> ... I had an amusing dinner the other day sitting between Lord Peel and the Aga Khan. Do you know who he is? He is direct descendant of the prophet, supreme head of half the Shia world, and an English subject, and enormously rich (his sect allows him £180,000 per year) and a pretender to the throne of Persia.... he explained to Gilbert Russell, who he knows very well, that he was so rich that £2,000 was to him as a sixpence to other people. 'Then', said Gilbert, 'could you change me a shilling?'

The summer of 1909 provided the Aga with good opportunities to flex his PR muscles. He had become quite friendly with Sir Arthur Bigge, later Lord Stamfordham, private secretary to the Prince of Wales, and that summer the Aga met Sir Arthur several times; every time they met the Aga had something new, or different, or highly novel, to say about India. In their early conversations he had often assured Sir Arthur that India would remain quiet for about fifteen years or so and 'that nothing dangerous is likely to happen.' But every conversation seemed to leave the Aga more pessimistic, and in the end Sir Arthur suggested that perhaps the Aga should write a book about it.

The Aga was not so sure. Writing the book would be no problem, as he had been making notes on the subject for twelve years and they were, as he told Sir Arthur, 'quite ready for use.' But the Aga's métier was being the lobbyist who moulded government policy, not the publicist who broadcast to the world. What he really wanted to do was write something which could be placed by Sir Arthur in front of the Prince of Wales who 'as the future

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King Emperor of India and as the father of a line of King Emperors' could read and then place it before the King and members of the Government.

On 22nd July 1909 the Aga wrote, not a book but a long letter to Sir Arthur. Though his letters to friends and political associates were often written from very different addresses round the world — generally hotels in the South of France — his communications to important British officials in London, or the Palace, were invariably written from the Marlborough Club. In 1898, Edward VII, then Prince of Wales, had made the Aga a member of the Marlborough Club. For the Aga's generation of Indians, membership of a London club was a rare honour, and the Marlborough Club was the most coveted club of them all, providing as it did almost immediate *entrée* into royal circles. In some ways the Aga's letter to Sir Arthur Bigge was similar to the one he had written three years before to Sir Walter Roper-Lawrence, except that it was, possibly, even more alarming. The Aga had now lost faith in vast sections of the Indian army: 'the Gurkhas, the Muhammedans, the Rajputs, the Sikhs and the Mahrattas are all bad. The Pathans will rob everyone and will be unfaithful to everybody.' Already revolutionary violence, murders of Europeans and loyalists had taken place in India and the Aga thought the trend was accelerating. What he feared most was that if a war in Europe took place then:

> There will be a great uprising all over India with a mutiny of native troops recruited from certain sections of the population.... If tomorrow war in Europe between England and some powerful state in Asia such as Japan or Turkey takes place, or even if we get into a war with Afghanistan, there will certainly be an immediate and extended uprising everywhere and the Sikh troops will mutiny.

The Indian Maharajahs and Nawabs would stay loyal, but what could they do on their own? The only really loyal group would be the Muslims, but even here there were doubts about the younger generation who were being half bullied and half tricked by the Congress and being offered 'very showy baits'. But, consoled the Aga, 'by appealing to their religious zeal,' it might still be possible to keep the Muslim youngsters away from the Congress. Having presented his blood and thunder scenario, the Aga did not suggest a solution, except for hinting that the Government ought to do more to help loyalists like him. It is possible that like 'The Statement of Politics' he wrote to Sir Walter, this was another of those Aga markers, a sort of 'well, don't blame me, I did warn you.'

The Aga, by now, had begun to loathe John Morley. Though he and Ameer Ali had gained their objectives as regards separate rights for the Muslims and publicly he invariably supported Morley — and would again do so in a few months' time — privately, to possible Morley enemies, he was bitter about Morley's India policy. It was, he told Sir Arthur, attempting to mix Hindus and Muslims which, if successful, would discredit the leaders of the Muslims and realize the Raj's fear of an *entente cordiale* between Hindus and Muslims, with the Muslims joining the Congress.

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The Aga's letter was written with an eye to possible political developments in Britain. It came just two months after Lloyd George had introduced his People's Budget in April 1909, a budget that was to lead to political turmoil for two years, a constitutional crisis with the House of Lords and two general elections in 1910. The Aga could not have anticipated all the consequences in July 1909, but he probably thought it was a good moment to blacken John Morley's India policies — particularly in front of a powerful, and potentially very strong Conservative supporter, the Prince of Wales. Sir Arthur does not seem to have reacted to the Aga's scenario and for a time nothing much happened. In any case, within a few weeks the Aga, having done his political duty as it were, left London for his seasonal holiday in Europe. He set out to take the waters at Vichy, then travelled through the South of France to Switzerland.

It was the year of Diaghilev, the Russian impresario who had brought his ballets to the West. Theresa Magliano had already introduced the Aga to ballet, and he was immediately captivated by Diaghilev when he caught up with him at Monte Carlo. In his *Memoirs*, the Aga would write about the happiness which his involvement with the ballet had brought to him, about how he had been intimately involved in Diaghilev's creations and found the dancers enchanting. In particular there was Tamara Karsavina, a dark lustrous beauty with whom the Aga soon became infatuated. Unfortunately for the Aga a great many men were infatuated with Karsavina: Robert Brussel, Maxime Dethomas, Chaliapin. But though Karsavina's list of admirers was a long one, she was not promiscuous. The Aga made many overtures and, during his stay in Monte Carlo he almost continually sighed for her, but Karsavina, while friendly and amusing — and prepared to dance for the Aga — would not go to bed with him. The Aga, who by now had acquired a villa in Monte Carlo, had to console himself with a pretty blonde dancer called Josefina Kohalevska. Theresa Magliano may or may not have known of the Aga's dalliance with Diaghilev's dancers. In any case, living in Nice she could have done little about events in Monte Carlo. Significantly, when the Aga did occasionally visit her in Nice, he stayed not at the villa he had built for her, but at the Hotel Negresco on the Nice sea front.

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The Aga returned to politics and India in October. This was the familiar public Aga arguing for the reforms that Morley had been pushing through Parliament, assuring both the Government and his audience that things would work out well if everybody showed goodwill. In November 1909, in a telegram to *The Times*, he strongly recommended Morley's proposals and in February 1910, at a meeting organized by fellow Muslims to felicitate him, he described the reforms as generous and far-reaching in effect which 'had placed not only Mohammedans but the whole people of India on their trial.'

In November 1909, as regulations for the Council's Act were being finalized, Harvey Adamson, Home Member for the Viceroy's Executive

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Council (under the Raj set-up the Home Member was roughly, although not quite, equivalent to the British Home Secretary) poured considerable scorn on the Aga's advice. The Aga had recommended a plan, but Adamson wondered whether it would be wise to accept ideas from the leader of a small Shia sect, when the great majority of Muslims in India were Sunnis or Shias opposed to the Khojas. It seemed to Adamson that the Aga's proposals were with an eye to getting himself elected to the Council and he recommended that 'the doubtful advocacy of the Aga Khan is [to be] dispensed with.'

The possibility of high office certainly played a part in the calculations of the Aga and Ameer Ali. In the discussions which had preceded the introduction of the reforms, two glittering prizes had been held out to Indians. One was the possibility of an Indian being nominated to the India Council which advised the Secretary of State in London; the other was of becoming the first Indian to be a member of the Viceroy's Executive Council — the all-powerful, until then all-British, body that was effectively the Viceroy's Cabinet. Ameer Ali was clearly keen to be a member of the India Council in London and Minto got the distinct impression that the Aga was keen to become the first 'Native Member' of the Viceroy's Executive Council. But Minto had set his sights on S. P. Sinha, an immensely successful barrister in the Calcutta High Court, having what the Bengalis called a 'roaring practice'. Sinha had impressed Minto as a native worthy of sitting on his Council.

The Aga had wind of these proposals from London and before leaving for India he met Morley and suggested that perhaps Sinha was not all that loyal. When Morley reported this to Minto, the Viceroy waspishly commented that 'the suspicions of the people you refer to are beneath contempt.' He had heard such allegations from the Aga Khan before and he was convinced, as he told Morley, that the Aga had very little influence in India. The Aga could not stop Sinha from becoming the first Indian Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council.

If indeed the Aga was not capable of the sort of hard, political work that Minto wanted, he could still be a very adept fund raiser. For some years now, Muslims had been agitating to convert Aligarh College into an affiliated university and the Aga, travelling in a special railway car, spent a good part of the winter of 1909/1910, touring Muslim areas, to the great delight of the Urdu press. By the time he arrived in Calcutta, on 9th February 1910 to be a guest of the Mintos, Lady Minto — whatever her husband felt — could barely contain her enthusiasm for the Aga.

That winter, the Aga also struck up a personal friendship with Valentine Chirol, the correspondent of *The Times*. The Aga had always had a keen eye for publicity and ever since his friendship with Sir Walter Roper-Lawrence he had made it a point to cultivate the Indian correspondents of *The Times*. Then, *The Times* was crucial in moulding English opinion, and the Aga knew how useful it would be to be friendly with *The Times*' man in India. In his speeches the Aga acknowledged the help of *The Times* in securing Muslim rights, and Valentine Chirol in turn, reported to *The Times*

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that the Aga's speeches were of such quality that 'no language could be more generous or more statesman-like.'

In May 1910, Edward VII died and the Aga hurried back to London to attend his funeral. Things seemed to be moving right for the Aga. The Prince of Wales was now King George V, and the Aga had already established, as we have seen, good lines of communication with Sir Arthur Bigge. In September 1910 there was even better news. John Morley resigned as Secretary of State, and few mourned his departure from the Indian Office. Morley did, however, ensure that the next Viceroy, in succession to Minto, would be an under-secretary in the Foreign Office, Sir Charles Hardinge, rather than Lord Kitchener who was favoured by Minto, Asquith and the King.

The Aga, in his usual fashion, beavered away. He always believed in keeping all his lines of communication open and, some time in the summer of 1910, he wrote to Gokhale about bridging the gap between the Hindus and the Muslims. Gokhale thought it was interesting, and when the Aga returned for his sojourn in India in the winter of 1910, the meeting took place — in Allahabad on New Year's Day 1911. The Aga spoke for the Muslims; there was a great deal of noise, debate and discussion and in the end a committee of Hindus, Muslims and Gokhale was formed to examine the controversial issues that separated the two religious groups. The meeting did little except set the precedent for many such unity conferences and committees that would be born — and would die — in the tangled history of the politics of the two religions. Soon the Aga was back in Europe to attend the sort of ceremonial he loved.

In the summer of 1911, King George V was crowned and the Aga was a personal guest of the King. It was while he was in London that he heard that Theresa had given birth to a son, though he had political matters to attend to before he could travel to Italy to see his wife and child. Soon after the coronation the Aga, in a lecture at the Crystal Palace theatre on 'the Muslims of the British Empire', returned to his old theme of the Prince Regent, who would go to India 'as a young man and only coming to Europe on his holidays.'

The Aga, of course, had often conveyed such views to the Prince of Wales through Sir Arthur Bigge and it is possible that they did influence George V. To make the sort of changes that the Aga wanted would have been a bit too drastic, and beyond the power of even the King Emperor. But it is likely that George V took the essence of the Aga's plan — the presence of an English King among the Indian masses — and saw in it the germ of a very good idea. He announced that in the winter of 1911 he, accompanied by Queen Mary, would travel to India and hold a Durbar — that intrinsically Indian occasion when Indians of every caste, creed and community, pay homage to their ruling King.

While Liberal England scoffed at the idea, in India every opinion — barring the very small extremist revolutionary group — enthusiastically welcomed it. In the Imperial Legislative Council, Hardinge was almost embarrassed by the effusiveness of the Indians out-

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rivalling one another in welcoming the King to their country, and not caring a bit about how much money they spent as long as it was a grand occasion to prove to the King the loyalty of the Indians.

Curzon's 1906 partition of Bengal, the leading province in India, had sparked the first thorough-going nationalist agitation, if largely Hindu inspired. Now George V proposed to undo the partition. He brushed aside the objections raised by the entire Raj, including Hardinge who, in the great Raj tradition, thought that nothing dramatic ought to be announced at the Durbar, as India wanted not political fireworks but peace and quiet. But George V was determined, and in December 1911, in front of as magnificent a gathering as India had ever seen, he announced that Bengal was going to be united again. To balance matters, and as a sop obviously to Muslim feeling, he also announced that the capital of British India would be shifted from Calcutta to Delhi — the ancient capital of India and associated in Muslim mind with the glory of Mogul rule.

Though Indians acclaimed the royal visit, and one Congressman called it 'the grandest and most bloodless revolution in history,' the Aga's account of the Durbar is curiously sour. This may be because at the investiture, at which he received his decoration of the GCSI, he was genuinely worried that he might be burned to a frazzle. The ceremony was held at night in a brilliantly lit tent, and one of the bulbs under the canvas canopy of the roof began to play pranks. The great fear was that it would explode, and had it done so then almost everybody inside that tent might have been burnt to death — apart from the King and Queen who probably would have been saved by their officers.

The Aga may also have been upset because he does not appear to have got any food at the great state banquet. In his *Memoirs* he mentions that, due to some disaster in the kitchens 'the food that emerged was just enough to give the King and a handful of people near him a full meal.' The Aga does not actually mention whether he missed out on the dinner. In the Raj pecking order the Aga, who was not a ruling prince and did not own any state or land, came fairly low down; almost certainly after the first and second class Ruling Chiefs and even below some other members of the landed aristocracy. If that was the case, then very likely the Aga missed the meal — and this was something that a man with his appetite could hardly have enjoyed.

The greater long-term worry was the change in political appetites produced by the King's visit. Muslims in India had never been united. Though they did not suffer from the rigid caste distinctions that divided Hindu society, they too had their own caste and regional differences. The Syeds scorned other Muslims who were supposedly converts from Hinduism and not descendants of the conquering Middle Eastern and Turkish tribes that ruled India in the Middle Ages. George V's annulment of Curzon's partition of Bengal had accentuated the regional differences. Bengal was by far the most populated Muslim province in India, but its numbers counted for nothing against the political influence of Aligarh and the Northern Indian Muslims. Curzon's decision to partition Bengal into a

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predominantly Hindu West and a Muslim East provided the Bengal Muslims with some hope that they could convert their numerical superiority into a real one. George V's announcement had dashed those hopes and the Aga's defence of his decision had not gone down very well. There was a certain irony in this. The fears that had led to the Simla deputation and the Aga's rise to prominence, had been a reaction to the first All-India agitation provoked by Curzon's partition of Bengal. That agitation was largely dominated by the Hindus, and the Raj, worried by this, had encouraged the Muslims to organize on their own. The annulment of partition had completed this particular cycle of Indian politics and now began to throw out new leaders, who did not much care for the Aga's brand of loyal support for the Raj.

The Aga, though a young man in political terms, had begun to appear as a standard bearer of old politics.

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Chapter 10

The Retreat to a Safe Tent

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If *Who's Who* is taken as a yardstick of a person's prominence, then 1911 marks the arrival in the West of the Aga as leader of the Indian Muslims. That year he made it into *Who's Who* where he was described as 'the acknowledged leader of the Indian Mohammedans'. *Who's Who* was following the lead of *The Times* which had begun to describe the Aga as 'one of the most broad-minded and highly educated of Indians'. And *Who's Who*, in turn, was copied by the Indian version of *Who's Who*. The 1906 edition of the *Indian Dictionary of National Biography* had not mentioned the third Aga Khan, though it had mentioned the first, but the 1911 edition of the Indian *Who's Who* did write fulsomely about Aga Khan III.

He was now thirty-four, sophisticated, at home in the Edwardian world and, to look at, every inch a leader of his people. The rather severe face he had revealed to the world in his twenties had now fleshed out and rounded to match the three-piece suit and the stiff starched collars he preferred. If his eyebrows were not quite as prominently arched as his grandfather's, they nicely set off a face topped by thick, shiny black hair, regularly parted down the middle and matched by a colourful, though not ostentatious moustache. Whenever he travelled in Europe, his physique and bearing caused comment and, among the knowledgeable, political speculations; his various comings and goings between India, England and Europe — generally the South of France — had also begun to be regularly recorded in *The Times*.

In 1906, the Aga had presented himself to Sir Walter Roper-Lawrence as a rich, dilettante Persian who had time and money to speculate about Indian politics. Five years on, in 1911, his estimation of his own self had changed somewhat. Sir Walter had been replaced as his English friend by Harcourt Butler, an uncle of R. A. Butler, and then the Education Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council — roughly the Education Secretary in the Viceroy's Cabinet. Although Butler had played a very big part in helping the Muslims organize the 1906 Simla deputation, the Aga made his acquaintance some two years after that and their friendship really blossomed in the crucial years of 1911-1913. The two Aga friendships were curiously similar: Sir Walter and Harcourt Butler were both Englishmen in

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high official positions and the Aga would be astonishingly frank with them, revealing his innermost feelings and fears.

But whereas the Aga depended on Sir Walter, his relationship with Harcourt Butler was in terms of great equality. Now he was the Indian who knew his country and could relate it to Europe almost better than anyone else.

The Aga could take almost perverse pride from the fact that although he often left his 'people' to spend long months in Europe, enjoying the London season and the pleasure haunts of the South of France, they seemed to carry on quite well without him. But every time he returned to India he found that the political ground had shifted a little from under his feet, making his style of politics difficult.

The Muslims had already won much. A separate — and grossly disproportionate — electoral system was in force in British India. Now the main Muslim question was how to convert Aligarh College into a university. This issue had been hanging round for a very long time, with the Muslims unable to agree how much control they should allow the Government to have in their university. The Raj had learned its lesson from the Macaulay-inspired schools and universities set up in India in the previous eighty years. They had only produced a class of educated Indians who wanted 'rights' from Britain. The Hindus had also been agitating for a separate university and, as Butler put it, separate Hindu and Muslim universities could well act as 'centres and foci of political agitation and religious rivalry.' But Butler saw no harm in having a Muslim university whose very charter gave the Government 'the power to step in if things go wrong.'

Muslim leaders had set their heart on a grandiose university which would have the power to affiliate colleges along the lines of Oxford or Cambridge — a prospect that horrified the Raj. The Aga's solution was what may be called 'quiet diplomacy', but it was of such Byzantine intrigue that it at times baffled even Butler and other Raj officials. The Aga, in his fund raising tours, had collected Rs 2,000,000 (£200,000). He proposed to Butler that the only way the Government could impose its own charter was if 'in the greatest confidence and most secretly' it told the Aga the minimum, absolutely essential conditions that it would need. The Aga promised to organize a Charter that would contain those very terms. A Muslim university constitution committee had been formed but the Aga was obsessed with the fear that should this committee produce a draft charter unacceptable to the Government then the difference between the Muslims and the Government would come out into the open. The Muslims, the Aga told Butler, were 'touchy'. Any indication of open disagreement between the Government and the Muslims would be quite disastrous. But though the Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, and Butler wanted to control the proposed Muslim university, neither could understand the Aga's obsession with secrecy, or his hurry. Ali Imam, another prominent Muslim leader, was formally negotiating with the Government about the university and Butler did not think it was fair for the Government to allow the Aga to intrigue behind Ali Imam's back.

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The Aga saw himself as a practical man of politics and he could not understand all the fuss about affiliation. For him, affiliation was merely a question of finance. As he put it in a letter to Butler, the University would 'depend on the goodwill and sentimental interest of local people' and they had to be provided with 'the vague hope' that one day their local high school may be raised to the status of a college. The Aga had no illusions about what Muslim India could produce. He did not believe that Muslims would be capable of 'raising colleges fit to be affiliated' for a generation. So why lock a door that was not likely to be used for at least twenty years?

Unfortunately for the Aga, a new generation of Muslim leaders had arisen who saw the differences over the university question as a symbol of something much deeper. The most prominent of them were two brothers. Shaukat Ali, the elder, was a large, strapping lad who had made a reputation as a cricket captain and the most gregarious of companions. In the winter of 1909-1910, he had accompanied the Aga on his highly successful tour of the Muslim areas in order to gather funds for the Aligarh University project. He worked for the Government as a sub-deputy opium agent and used his income to finance his younger brother, Muhammed Ali, through an English education. Though Muhammed had failed the coveted Indian Civil Service examination, he had graduated in History from Oxford and, on his return to India, established his reputation as a fine, polemical journalist. By 1911 he had started his own English weekly, *Comrade*, where he began to question the Aga's politics. If Hindus, he asked, could secure victories by agitation, shouldn't Muslims abandon the Aga's approach of 'no agitation, please, we are loyal Raj supporters.'

What made his dissent even more difficult for the Aga was that Muhammed Ali's politics linked both orthodox Ulema school of Muslims and the modern educated ones. Ironically, the bridge between the two — who should have had little in common — had been built by European scholars keen to denigrate Islam. These scholars had presented Islam and Islamic civilizations as a foe of Christian Europe both in medieval and modern times and in so doing, had portrayed Islam as a world religion with centres in the Middle East and Arabia virtually confronting Christianity. This, far from putting off educated Indian Muslims, only made them realize that they belonged to a worldwide movement with a long and chequered history.

The British, convinced that the danger to their rule came from educated Hindus, not pan-Islamic Muslims, happily encouraged all this. But when in the early part of this century, British policy towards Russia, and consequently Turkey, changed, pan-Islamism in India took on a different hue. As Britain and Russia edged closer together and the Ottoman Empire crumbled, Indian Muslims began to doubt Britain's claim to be a protector of Islam and the greatest Muslim power second only to Turkey. The Tzar of Russia had dubbed Turkey the 'sick man of Europe'. This old man, however, was taking a long time to die and every death throe produced a fresh crisis for the Indian Muslims. In 1908, Serbia, Montenegro, Greece, Rumania and Bulgaria had seceded from the Ottoman Empire. The same

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year, Turkey revolted and this revolution led to further wars and more loss to the Turks. Persia was also going through convulsions, some of them Russian instigated, and Indian Muslims saw it all as a case of Europeans ganging up together to strike against the Independent Muslim powers; the old battle, Christianity versus Islam.

The Aga did not share Muhammed Ali's pan-Islamic feelings. He would later confess to Butler — in a long, poignant letter from the South of France — that his Ismaili Khojas 'had been persecuted by Sunni and Shias alike for one hundred years.... I and my followers, we have no country except the Union Jack.'

By the spring of 1912, the divide between the Aga and Muhammed Ali and his friends could no longer be papered over. Since 1908, the Muslim League's headquarters had been in Aligarh. But in 1910 the headquarters had moved to Lucknow — also in northern India and a traditional Muslim centre — and this had encouraged the influx of lawyers — the class of Indians the Raj detested most, and who formed the backbone of the Indian National Congress. The Aga offered to resign from the presidency. He suggested that perhaps the League ought to return to its 1906 idea of having three presidents, thus reflecting the contrasting views held in the organization. He also urged the League to follow a more moderate policy and control the activities of the radicals. But though the League refused to accept the Aga's resignation, it was the radicals who made all the running at the annual session in March of that year. Speeches showed that the Muslims had not forgiven the Raj for uniting the two parts of Bengal, and there was bitter criticism of Britain's neutrality in the Turkish wars and failure to restrain Italy from annexing Libya. *The Times* correspondent noted sadly that: 'Indian Muslim feeling ... is growing somewhat unreasonable ... the influence of a wise leader is most desirable.' This was probably a heavy *Times* hint for the Aga to do something, but by then the 'wise leader' was already on his way to Europe for his annual summer visit.

Even this provided little pleasure. On 12th July 1912, the Aga went to Whitehall to meet Lord Crewe, who had replaced John Morley as Secretary of State for India, to sort out finally the Aligarh University question. Lord Crewe listened to the Aga attentively and was quite impressed with his 'sincerity and earnestness'. But he could do little to help. Hardinge was dead set against a university with affiliation powers and Crewe agreed with him.

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The social scene provided a few distractions. It was a very fine summer and it was the rage to have Russian dancers perform at parties. Almost every party seemed to have a Russian dancing there, particularly Njinsky. In July, at considerable expense, the Aga threw a party at the Ritz where Njinsky, Zambelli and Karsavina danced for his guests. To see Karsavina dance was a delight, though she still refused to do more than that for him. Vichy, where this year he went for his traditional three-week cure in the middle of summer, was happily not quite as hot as the previous summer — when it

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was hotter than India and the Aga felt he could not bear it — and there was always Josefina Kovalevska.

But not even the simplicity of Kovalevska could charm away the Aga's political anguish. He normally spent August at Aix-les-Bains, generally staying at the Hotel de l'Europe at Villa Victoria. This was what he would later describe to Beaverbrook as his holiday of holidays; he would have no secretary and would just come to relax and recuperate.

As the summer of 1912 rolled on and Muhammed Ali and his friends gained with every stride, the Aga's hand-wringing became even more desperate. Breaking with his holiday routine, the Aga wrote an anguished letter to Butler which was almost like a cry of pain. Couldn't the Foreign Office be more tactful about Persia and Turkey? 'In every Muslim country there is a white heat of feeling of bitterness at the passing away of all Moslem states. And I wish that something could be done at the eleventh hour to prevent the disappearance of Persia and Turkey.' What the Foreign Office should actually do, he did not suggest and, of course, there was no question of him turning against the Raj. Even though he sympathized with those Muslims who felt 'the terrible sadness of seeing all Muslim states disappear in one short generation,' and shared a feeling of being a lonely Muslim in a Europe conquered world, he still believed that the only reasonable course was to try and argue loyally with the British about the importance of Turkey.

He was, however, still disinclined to return to India and fight Muhammed Ali — and actually seemed to be withdrawing from Indian politics. In August 1912 he was proposed as a candidate of the Bombay Muslims to the Viceroy's Council. But he declined the offer, announcing that he had to visit South and East Africa and could not afford the time to stand for the elections. Instead of Africa, however, the Aga went to Russia. This meant getting a passport for the first time, which gives us some idea of the pre-First World War world. Although the Aga had often travelled out of India to France, Africa and, of course, England, he had so far required no passport. The passport was swiftly issued but for reasons that are not entirely clear the Aga kept delaying his visit to Moscow. He was originally scheduled to leave Paris for Berlin by 15th September, but he did not leave until November. And when he got to Moscow, there was a fresh crisis.

A Red Crescent Society had been formed to provide medical aid for Turkish troops in the Balkan War and a medical mission of doctors and nurses was sent from India. There were Muslim calls for funds for the Red Crescent Society and strong demands that the thirty lakhs (Rs 300,000) collected for the Aligarh Muslim University project should be devoted to the Balkan War. *The Times* on 5th November 1912, carried a story from Calcutta which said that the Aga had sent a message from Moscow urging 'Muslims to concentrate their efforts on the Balkans and lay aside the university project.' The Aga quickly denied the story, claiming that all he meant to say was that no more funds should be collected for the university project, not that funds meant for the university should be transferred to help Turkey. But, he added, Muslims should now concentrate on relieving the suffering of the Turkish people.

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The Aga was wise to issue the statement. Government intelligence sources were reporting that the Indian Red Crescent Society was a rich conduit for Turkish-inspired pan-Islamic propaganda. Muhammed Ali had played a leading part in these intrigues, and many of the organizers of the Society had attended meetings in Cairo's Club des Écoles Supérieures to co-ordinate a pan-Islamic anti-British strategy.

It was just before Christmas that the Aga finally arrived back in Bombay. He was still full of interesting gossip, pleasant and charming, but when Chirol met him he could not help but think that the Aga was 'very despondent'. Once again he pleaded with Chirol that Britain ought to express some sympathy with Turkey — a policy that Hardinge had been fruitlessly advocating with Crewe. The Aga persuaded Chirol that the longer Britain stayed on the sidelines as regards Turkey, the better the chances of the Hindu politicians getting at the Muslims. But he promised Chirol that he would still fight the Government's case at the forthcoming All-India Muslim League session, though he was not hopeful that he would win.

When the League met, it was dominated by Muhammed Ali and his supporters, who succeeded in passing a resolution calling for a 'suitable' system of self-government for British India. Six years after the Aga had helped set it up to be loyal to the Government, it had now steered dangerously close to what the Indian National Congress had been wanting all along.

An acquaintance of Muhammed Ali, Wazir Hasan, had now become Secretary of the League and he believed that the League ought to get closer to the Congress. The Aga, increasingly desperate, felt he had to do something to shore up his crumbling position. He was still very friendly with the English-language papers of India and decided to write an article in the *Times of India* on how Indian Muslims could be both loyal to the Raj and help Turkey. They should concentrate, he argued, on relieving those who had suffered during the war, leaving the Turkish Government to determine the question of peace and war. Turkey could be a strong Asiatic power — that was in the interests of England since Turkey would protect the road to India — but Indian Muslims must do nothing to 'weaken England's confidence in Islam and the loyalty of Indian Mussalmans.' The Aga was well aware that the article really should have been written by a prominent Sunni or Shia 'of assured position', as he confessed to Butler later. He feared that by going into print he would 'put an end ... to the fiction of my leadership.' But, he rationalized, this had already been destroyed by events in Turkey and Persia.

But a public expression of what were seen as anti-Turkish views raised a storm of protest. There were calls for his resignation from the presidency and, what was worse, the Aga's right to lead the Muslims was questioned. For six years he, the leader of a small heretical Muslim sect, had led the Indian Muslims, most of them who owed no allegiance to his sect. Now they began to question his right to speak for them. A member of the Muslim League Council said 'if the Aga Khan thinks he is our God, he is greatly

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mistaken, he is God only to his foolish followers.' Another argued 'Aga Khan has so long had his own way with his followers, he thinks we are sheep, as they.'

Even more damaging, the vituperative Urdu press now began to question the status of the Aga Khan as God of the Khojas, and ridicule the Khojas. Were they real Muslims? Who were these converts who claimed to be Muslims? And who was this Aga Khan who claimed to be a leader of the Muslims, when he was actually the leader of a very small sect that had been converted to Islam a mere 400 years ago? To the Aga, this was not political criticism — it was blasphemy. His bewildered followers, who believed he was God, began to be attacked by other Muslims, and the Aga feared this ridicule could destroy their faith in him.

The absurdity of his own leadership was evident to the Aga. On 3rd March 1913, ensconced at his Bombay residence of *Land's End* at Malabar Hill, he wrote to Butler:

> ... that it was impossible for one who like myself is sincerely loyal and who is at the same time at the head of a small heretical sect ... to lead them [Indian Muslims] now. For my first advice will be loyalty of the kind that means trust and confidence and that trust and confidence the Muslims are not now giving to Government.

The other Muslim leaders were already elbowing him out. The Muslims were proposing to send another delegation to the Government on the Aligarh University question but, though the Aga was still nominally President of the League, they excluded him from the delegation and spread the rumour that he was about to leave for England. For the Aga, who had spent so much of his time and money on Aligarh, this was a cruel blow and he urged Butler to try and control the university otherwise it would be ruined in five years and merely 'expose the scandal of Muslim incompetence.'

The Aga, in fact, was so angry and bitter that he also wanted the Muslims to be exposed. The Muslims wanted to play with fire — well, in that case, the Aga advised Butler:

> ... I do not think that it is politically advisable for Government to refuse the fire that children want to play with provided care is taken that after they are burnt you can come in before they are dead of the burns. Personally, I am going to sit tight till time proves that my advice is right as to the university.

But no political leader can sit tight and do nothing, particularly when he is under pressure from opponents, and for the Aga, deserted, bereft of advice, with virtually nobody to turn to, these were confusing and bewildering times. His angry letter to Butler had been written on 3rd March 1913. That very day he presented evidence before the Royal Commission on the Public Services. It was looking into that most explosive of questions;

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how Indians could be recruited to the higher reaches of the Civil Service where the British held a virtual stranglehold. In the past, all such Commissions had been wholly British but this time Gokhale was invited to serve on it. The majority of the British on the Commission, who did not much want the Indians to challenge them for the higher jobs, hoped to isolate him and looked to the Aga for support. The Aga had promised Chirol that he would support the Raj line, but his evidence came as a complete shock to the British. Like Gokhale, he too wanted the Indianization of the Civil Service, simultaneous examinations for the Service to be held both in India and England and he refused to be baited on the Hindu-Muslim question. It was so much like the Congress line that Lord Sydenham, Governor of Bombay and an old patron of the Aga, warned Hardinge that the Aga had gone over 'horse, foot and artillery to the Congress.' This was sufficient to convince Sydenham that the Aga lacked moral courage (the British equated support for the Raj with moral courage). When the Aga met Sydenham he looked so depressed and dejected that the Governor of Bombay was convinced that the Aga had realized that his power had gone.

Outwardly, the Aga still exuded confidence. A few days before he had presented evidence to the Commission he had visited Valentine Chirol, also a member of the Commission and his neighbour on Malabar Hill. This was about the time that the Aga made his summer plans for Europe, but he assured Chirol he had no immediate intentions to go to England: he had much to do in India and was quite determined to fight Muhammed Ali and his friends over the question of the Aligarh University. Chirol was himself going back to England and, in the second week of March, he sailed on the SS *Persia*.

We don't know what happened in the two weeks between the Aga meeting Chirol and Chirol sailing for England. It is possible that the Muslim critics of the Aga threatened his life; maybe the twists and turns of his political career over the years finally caught up with him. But whatever it was, suddenly one day, as Chirol was walking on the deck of the first class cabins of the SS *Persia*, he saw the Aga Khan.

The effect was devastating. What on earth are you doing here? demanded Chirol. The Aga, nervous, depressed and, thought Chirol, 'inclined to be rather ashamed' (of his evidence to the Government Commission) could give no satisfactory answer. Chirol was convinced — as he told Hardinge — that the Aga was 'obviously in a blue funk as to his personal safety, I fancy he has just made a bolt for it.' This was the worst of Raj sins: not only did he lack moral courage, but he was also a physical coward.

Chirol bluntly told the Aga that he had surrendered totally all that the Muslims had built up since Simla in 1906; how could Muslims expect people like Chirol to support them if they were to perform such amazing U-turns? The Aga, Chirol reported to Hardinge,: 'had no reply, except to bemoan the difficulties of his own position. It is pitiable to see a man, who has often shown sound judgement and sometimes no little public courage, making such a wretched exhibition of himself.'

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Butler did try to win his friend back. On 26th March 1913, while the Aga was still on the high seas, Butler wrote a long imploring letter to him to take charge of his 'rudderless community'. The Aga had headed straight from India to the South of France. In the security of the Hotel Negresco on the Promenade des Anglais in Nice, he felt both self-righteous and indignant. He may have been the leader scorned by his people, but he was now pouring his scorn on the people he had led.

There was still some sympathy for the Aga in the Raj but the way he had fled the country had shaken a great many people. Hardinge, who found the Aga's 'frame of mind' extraordinarily interesting, thought he might come back as leader but doubted whether he had sufficient character ever to exercise real influence. Butler, who carried on his long-range correspondence with the Aga, continued to hope that the Aga would return to lead his countrymen, but privately met the Aga's many Muslim enemies and relished the gossip they had to tell him. The Nawab of Dacca spoke of the 'unreliability, vice and wickedness, not to mention disloyalty,' of the Aga; other Muslim politicians of his 'dubious ladies'; and the picture Butler painted of the Muslim leadership was bleak:

> The trouble is that they have no leader. Aga Khan is clever but a weathercock. Muhamabad is weak as water, so is Rampur and unreliable to boot. The Nawab of Dacca hates Aligarh and all its worth, much as he hates Aga Khan. The Secretary of the Muslim League, Wazir Hasan is a born intriguer and a mischievous fellow. He is a Shia and plays on Muhamabad's religious weakness and has at present great influence with him.

The Aga would confess to friends like Butler that he was indeed lazy; he liked the ease and comfort that life in England and the South of France provided him. But he was perfectly willing to give it all up and 'almost every other attraction in life' if only he could find some way that 'could bring the whole of what remained of independent Islam under British influence.' This would undoubtedly strengthen Muslims and be good for both England and Islam. But though he could speak in lofty tones about Islamic brotherhood — as he did in July during a meeting of the League in London — he had little or no affinity with the basic gut feeling that characterized most Muslims, and when Muslim attachment to the externals of their religion led to flare-ups, the Aga was often stunned.

On 1st July 1913 just such a flare-up took place in Kanpur, in Northern India. In trying to widen a road, the Kanpur civil authorities had knocked down the extension built to a mosque in the city. The extension was really a washing place and the British officials did not think it would make much difference, but the Muslims condemned the action as a desecration of a place of worship. The Ulema argued that the washing place was just as sacred as any part of the mosque. Such were the emotions generated that on 3rd August — the day the Governor of United Provinces, Sir James Meston, came to Kanpur to examine the situation — some ten to fifteen

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thousand people turned up at a meeting to mourn the loss of the washing place. Speaker after speaker reiterated that Islam was in danger; many in the audience wept and, as the emotionally charged crowd surged out of the meeting and headed for the mosque, they encountered the police. The effect was predictable. The mob assaulted the police with stones, the police fired and a number of Muslims were killed. Eventually, Muhammed Ali and others were able to raise such emotions on the subject that the Viceroy, overruling Meston, literally gave in.

The Aga watched these developments with a certain amount of sardonic amusement. He was in the Grande Hotel in St Gervais-les-Bains and writing from there to Butler, he frankly confessed that he belonged to 'a sect that has no love for mosques.' The Khojas worshipped in Jamat Khanas, but he had seen how sentimental his own followers could get about burial grounds and Jamat Khanas:

> I know so many similar cases in Zanzibar and in other parts of Africa, where for less I have had to beg my people not to go in for lawlessness. I have seen for much less thousands cry like children. I saw [for] far less, about the wall of a burial ground in Rangoon, old and young cry as I have rarely seen people cry.

It was a reasonable enough defence and quite a skilful one for in a letter explaining the Muslim attachment to the mosque, the Aga had skilfully used the Christian belief in the 'Real Presence', something which even some Protestants shared. But it was still an odd one. It was as if the Aga was not a Muslim but a sociologist who had studied the habits of another race and people.

Just as the Aga was explaining to Butler the significance of the mosque to Muslims, Muhammed Ali, accompanied by Wazir Hasan, quietly slipped out of India and sailed for England. They wanted to place Muslim views on the Aligarh University, the Kanpur mosque and other issues directly before the Government. The Muslim League passed a resolution agreeing to their mission only after they had left, and there was malicious comment in India that Muhammed Ali had left because the Government was about to act against *Comrade*. Whatever it was, when Muhammed Ali and Wazir Hasan arrived in London, they found that neither the Secretary of State nor other India Office officials were willing to meet them.

Their mission, however, was successful in some ways. Ameer Ali, the Muslim League's representative in London had also organized a British Red Crescent mission to help Turkey, and there had been rumours that he had been embezzling Red Crescent funds. Muhammed Ali and Wazir Hasan's presence in London worsened the situation, and in a flood of mutually recriminatory statements, Ameer Ali resigned on 31st October. The Aga — who had presided over a London League meeting as late as July — also resigned. He claimed 'considerable financial interest' kept him in Europe for six months or more a year and he was unable to carry out the duties of the President.

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The public break with the League was duplicated in his personal life as well. For reasons that are not entirely clear, the Aga broke with Josefina Kovalevska. At the height of controversy surrounding the Aga's leadership of the League, Muslim leaders had commented on the Aga's 'dubious ladies'. It could be that this prompted the break, and though the Aga did provide her with some money, Josefina would complain tearfully to her friends, 'I, who have my clothes from Doucet, now have to go shopping at the Magasin du Louvre!' There was some consolation for Kovalevska that autumn. She sailed with Diaghilev to Buenos Aires, and there attended Njinsky's wedding breakfast.

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Chapter 11

Some Local Difficulties

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The Aga's resignation from the Muslim League did not mean more time for Theresa. Just when Aly was two years old, the Aga had moved her from a posh flat in Corso Oporto in Turin to one in Monte Carlo, just above the Casino, and then later to one in Cimiez where, on his first visit to Europe in 1898, he had seen Queen Victoria. There was never any lack of money for Theresa, or material comforts, but of the Aga and his physical presence she had very little. Once a year in mid-July, the family would meet in Deauville for about three weeks when the father would play the absentee daddy to perfection, and Aly and Theresa would have one of their rare glimpses of him. He would come laden with gifts but, not surprisingly, no intimacy developed between father and son. Aly could get almost any toy he wanted, but he often did not even open some of the toys given to him — he plainly just lost interest.

The Aga, it seems, almost invariably saw Aly with the governess he had appointed for him and kept a certain distance. When the Aga hired Edmond Grin to tutor Aly, he introduced him to Aly as 'Monsieur Aly, I present your new professor. I hope that all will go well. He is very kind; you must be very kind. Now I will leave you together.' During the long absences of the Aga, Aly was alternately fussed over and reprimanded by his mother and adored by her family and the servants who surrounded him. His father's visits were often dislocating, as much for Aly as for Theresa, who could not make out a husband who rarely gave a straight answer to any question. The Aga spoke of the various diplomatic and political manoeuvres in which he was involved, but Theresa must have wondered what they were. For much of the time he was not very far away: at the Hotel et Villas des Ambassadeurs, at Vichy, or his favourite hotel, the de l'Europe at Villa Victoria in Aix-les-Bains, or the Grande Hotel at St Gervais-les-Bains, or even, most hurtfully, the Hotel Negresco at Nice — all within a few miles of the home he had set up for Theresa, but never at the home. The marriage, of course, had not yet been regularized and the Aga must have felt that this was the way to treat a mistress. Whatever it was, it produced a certain unmistakable reaction in Theresa and Aly. Theresa, not surprisingly, bitterly resented her less than satisfactory position and snapped at people who doubted her status as the 'Prince's' wife. There was some joy in

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bringing up Aly, but in the end relief came through sculpture. She set up a studio in her house at Cimiez and exhibited her work. This compensated for the loss of dancing and in time she would earn a little niche as a sculptress. The compensation for Aly was that in many ways the ambience of his life, mainly Italian, was not so different from what it might have been had he grown up in the Aga's family home in India. There were people to fuss over and adore him, and an intellectually untaxing atmosphere that gave him plenty of opportunity to play childish pranks and daydream of glories to come. Meanwhile, his father was chasing what he hoped were more tangible rewards.

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One of the affairs that concerned the Aga was a rather trifling incident in Zanzibar. In 1899 when he had visited Zanzibar, he had signed an agreement with the Sultan of Zanzibar's Government — run by the British — regarding Khoja rights with respect to a burial ground which lay along the M'nazi Moja road — the only open space in the city. The cemetery was itself walled with a gate and, under the agreement, the Khojas renounced all rights and interest in the land outside the walls of the cemetery. But, for some years after the agreement, they continued without the knowledge of the British authorities, to lease this land out and collect rent.

This was not discovered by the authorities until some time in 1910 when a decree was passed diverting the rent the Khojas had been collecting to the Zanzibar Government. The Khojas complained and by 1912, largely through the Aga's influence this small, but illuminating incident, had begun to involve the Viceroy, the India Office, the Foreign Office, and Mr Clarke, the hapless British agent in Zanzibar. Mr Clarke, operating on classical Colonial Government lines thought he could deal with the Khojas on a man-to-man basis. Although they were a law-abiding community, the niggling dispute refused to be settled and Clarke's opinion of the community changed for the worse. He began to think they were a superstitious, petty-minded lot who either did not tell their Aga everything or, in turn, were not told everything by the Aga. Clarke also failed to appreciate how subtly the Aga could use his powerful friends in India and London to try and get what he wanted.

Initially, the Aga did not seem to want anything. He seemed to be more interested in establishing that the Khojas were the most loyal of communities to the British and it was unfair that a British agent should treat them so unsympathetically. It was a nicely worked line, picturing the Khojas in Zanzibar as a beleaguered community hemmed in by other hostile Indian communities. The Khojas in Zanzibar, the Aga argued, spoke little or no English, yet nobody in Mr Clarke's office spoke either Hindustani or Gujerati. Mr Clarke relied on Parsees, who the Aga contended were ever eager to down the Khojas. Most of all, Mr Clarke ignored the Aga's followers' feeling for England. 'My people think and talk how in every other quarter of the globe they have only looked to and served England,

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even before Islam', wrote the Aga to the Viceroy. Did Mr Clarke care for this peculiar history of the Ismailis?

At first the Foreign Office was inclined to agree with their man, Mr Clarke. But, under pressure from the Viceroy, Clarke was made to realize how important the Aga was. At one stage Sir Edward Grey, the Foreign Secretary, even rebuked Clarke for the tone of his official despatches which failed to give proper consideration to the Aga's point of view. By the summer of 1912, the Aga promised British officials in London that he would visit Zanzibar the following year and settle matters. Clarke was not optimistic that an Aga visit would actually help. But with Foreign Office officials critical of his despatches — one was described as 'mostly rubbish' — he was hardly in a position to intervene. 1913 came and went, however, and still the Aga — recovering from his League fiasco — did not arrive in Zanzibar. The Aga's battle with Muhammed Ali — and his long-range correspondence with Butler — had exhausted him, and it was the summer of 1914 before he finally arrived in Zanzibar.

Clarke had not forgotten his humiliation and treated the Aga with such little respect that there was a great deal of grumbling within the Khoja community, some of whom now began to doubt whether the Aga was all he claimed to be. However, the Aga did manage to start talks on the burial ground problem. But just as he did so another, apparently trivial, incident in a far-off country occurred. Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife were assassinated in the little Bosnian border town of Sarajevo — and this little incident, as we know, was to have a dramatic effect.

The Aga's first gesture on hearing about the war was suitably loyal — and flamboyant. From Zanzibar, he telegraphed his various adherents to place their resources unreservedly at the disposal of the local British authorities and be prepared for any duty that might be assigned to them. In Zanzibar the Ismailis organized a transport corps of motor cars and motor cycles. And the Aga sent a personal message to the Secretary of State and the Viceroy placing himself at their disposal. By the middle of September, the Aga was in London applying to the War Office to serve as a private in the Indian contingent despatched to the European theatre of war. According to the Aga's *Memoirs*, Lord Kitchener, the newly appointed Secretary of State for War, would not hear of the Aga enlisting as a private. He had other tasks for him, and the Aga busied himself in propaganda.

Gandhi, fresh from his triumphs in South Africa, was ready and waiting in London and had become Chairman of the Indian Volunteers Committee. On 1st October 1914, he presided at a meeting of the committee at the Polytechnic in Regent Street and the Aga gave what *The Times* considered a 'stirring and patriotic address on the loyal spirit of India in this crisis.' An Indian Field Ambulance Corps had been formed and was proceeding to the front and at the meeting the Aga handed Gandhi a cheque for £200 for a fund to provide extra comforts for the ambulance corps.

Amidst enthusiastic cheers of the mostly Indian audience, the Aga told the meeting that he envied the Indians who were going to the front and he hoped that if he could not fight he would join the Corps as an interpreter.

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Germany was condemned as the most dangerous enemy of Turkey and other Muslim countries, and as to the Kaiser's claim of being the protector of Islam, the Aga retorted, 'heaven forbid that they [Muslims] should have such an immoral protector.' This went down very well with the meeting as indeed did the general loyalist statement that 'Britain is India's protector, a weak Britain means a wretched India and all India wants is that the spirit of Queen Victoria's proclamation of 1858 should be kept.'

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Chapter 12

Britain's Islamic Champion
Part I — Diplomacy

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Almost six years before war was declared the Aga had been confident that once the European war began there would be a great uprising all over India, with Indian troops mutinying to drive the British out of their country. As we have seen, he had made this prediction to Lord Stamfordham 'with a full sense of responsibility' and was even prepared to stake his 'reputation' on the grim forecast coming true. The Aga, of course, was trying to reap political advantage through predicting disaster but, once the war came, his forecast would prove thunderously wrong.

The causes of the war were mysterious to most Indians, the war itself was very remote but — apart from a few revolutionary groups of which we shall see a bit more a little later — most Indians rallied to the Empire's cause, as the saying went. They supplied 800,000 troops in all, in various theatres of war, with 50,000 fighting on the battlefields of Europe. By the time the war ended, the Indian Army had swelled to nearly half a million, only 64,000 of which were British; a quarter of a million Indians were in Mesopotamia, Persia and the Trans-Caspian and the Caucasian regions south of Russia. Indian troops had been decisive in the Middle East, destroying the power of Turkey and helping create the Arab revolution against the Ottomans. In 1918, Allenby conquered Palestine with an army of which two-thirds of the infantry and one-third of the cavalry were Indian. Indian arms, almost certainly, prevented East Africa from falling to the Germans. Brighton Pavilion was given over as a hospital for wounded Indians and the picture of India's loyalty to the Raj was summed up in the cartoon of the turbanned Indian atop a horse saluting John Bull and saying, 'there are 165,000 of us, Sir, ready and waiting.'

The Aga's failure as a forecaster, however, did his reputation with the British no harm. If anything, it probably enhanced it. At the beginning of the First World War, the Aga was no more than a private individual. His defeat at the hands of Muhammed Ali meant that he could no longer claim to be the leader of the world Muslims; yet in the years during and after the war the Aga, without a country, almost without a people, managed to play the world's leading Muslim statesman, at least on the British stage. We shall examine in detail his role as statesman and how he achieved it.

Partly, this was through his charm — a quality that his son Aly would possess to an even greater degree — partly through his ability to generate

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among the British that most valuable feeling, 'that he is really one of us.' Compared to, say, Shah Muzaffer ed-Din, one of the Qajar Shahs of Persia, the Aga could be relied on to behave like one of our good *WOGs*, to use the expression in its more acceptable meaning of 'Westernized Oriental Gentleman.' Shah Muzaffer ed-Din, when presented to the Curies and their discovery of radium, had gone shrieking out of the cellar, raving and ranting that the Curies were out to murder him. The Aga, who re-tells the story with malicious delight in his *Memoirs*, would never have been guilty of such childishness. As he had told Sir Walter Roper-Lawrence, he had the time and money to acquire knowledge; and the knowledge he had gained was skilfully used both in public and private, to project a man of wide learning. Thus, in his correspondence with Harcourt Butler, arguing the case for a more favourable British policy towards Turkey, or a more understanding one, the Aga often invoked quite shrewd and knowledgeable analogies. Butler clearly liked teasing him, suggesting in one letter that he needed to 'rest' to recover from the pressures of the London season.

Butler and others may also have admired the cheek of the Aga: those long missives from the South of France, and playing to the hilt the role of the leader in the wings hoping to lead his ignorant, superstitious people out into the promised land. The fact that the Aga was a second generation Indian immigrant, and still hankered after Persia, only added to his lustre. The British, interlopers in India themselves, appreciated the value of other interlopers, particularly people like the Aga who could claim more than one string to their bow. But more than all this was the simple fact that in those years Britain, ruling a large Muslim population, and in potential conflict with independent Muslim states, had no other Muslim leader. They may not have wanted the Aga but they were stuck with him — at least in public.

This is where the Aga's genius as a PR man stood out, for he shrewdly exploited Britain's needs, and the disunity and backwardness of his own community. The Muslims in India may have disowned the Aga, but they were loath to proclaim this. To them he was an irrelevance, providing vicarious thrills by his exploits in Monte Carlo and other flesh-pots of the West: suggesting to them the wonders that would be theirs, the Western women and money to be won if only they had the means. Publicly they did nothing to disabuse the Aga, or inform the world of his pretensions to lead them. This Muslim schizophrenia is reflected even in their history. Thus, in K. K. Aziz's *Britain and Muslim India* , supposedly a study of the rise of Muslim nationalism in India, the Aga Khan disappears from the book at the time of the Delhi Durbar where, says the author, George V's annulment of partition choked criticism and 'such ''loyalists'' as the Aga Khan and Ameer Ali were forced to leave the organisation.'

The suggestion is that George V baited the loyalists (Aziz seems to prefer inverted commas for the word 'loyalist'), and thereby helped the radicals gain power. No other explanation is provided, and the Aga reappears in the history fifteen years later to head the Muslim delegation to the first of the three Round Table Conferences. In between we have a large swathe of familiar anti-Congress, anti-Hindu abuse. It is natural that the Muslims

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seeking to invest a pristine nationalism should have taken such a line though, in terms of history and fact, their argument that everything that happened in India was the fault of (a) the Congress and the Hindus (in Muslim League eyes these were synonymous terms), or (b) because of the perfidy of the Raj, makes for niggling propaganda and very poor history.

The Raj could be merciless towards those who had failed. The Aga had shown himself to be that most unreliable of Indians: the man who had run when the chips were down. One of the persistent criticisms by the Raj of all Indians was that they lacked character, they could not stand the heat of the fire. As one official had asked:

> Why does everyone wobble in India? Is it because the Government of India stand fire at short range?

On this measure, the Aga Khan was the worst of wobblers. But the Raj did not disown him; privately they may have written him off as a leader, publicly they still pretended that he was the leader of the Indian Muslims — nay, one of the most far-sighted and educated leaders of the Indian Muslims. There were gradations in this approbation. Like his grandfather, Aga III was adept at charming what he considered were the right officials. So the ones in his home town of Bombay were, almost invariably, more favourable to him than any of the others. Generally the officials in India were favourable to him, less so the ones in the India Office in London, or in the Foreign Office. Their ambit was less parochial, their concerns much wider than just preserving the Raj in India — and they often rumbled the true worth and intentions of the Aga. The Aga's role was a shadowy one with many complications but it was an intriguing one as well.

If the Aga's *Memoirs* are to be believed, then the intrigues began early. The reason Kitchener refused to enlist him in the Indian contingent was that he wanted to use the Aga's diplomatic skills to persuade Turkey to remain neutral in the war. But after consultation with the Turkish Ambassador in London, the Aga advised Kitchener that negotiations would have a greater chance of success if he tried to get the Turks to join the Allies. Kitchener rejected the Aga's advice and the negotiations failed. As the Aga presents it in his *Memoirs* this was the decisive moment of the war. Was it?

As, of course, with all the other 'Agafacts', we are faced with a problem — or rather several. For a start, the Aga is extremely reluctant to mention specific dates — the closest he comes to this is to talk about the end of 1914, or the close of 1914, or the early months of 1915. Neither Kitchener's biographer, nor his private papers refer to any Turkish initiative being launched during those crucial first weeks of the war. The Aga, in fact, does not feature in the Kitchener papers, except for a very minor reference to his visit to Egypt when Kitchener was the British representative there some years earlier. Kitchener did like the Turks and wanted to become ambassador in Constantinople, and felt that had he been there in 1913-1914, he might have got Turkey to join the Allies. But that is a long way from establishing links with the Aga's alleged diplomacy.

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In any case, the Aga's story of how Turkey slid into war is extremely difficult to make tally with generally accepted historical records about this rather involved event. A proper study of that could fill volumes and has done so — but nowhere is the Aga mentioned. Turkey slid into war as a result of a power struggle between the extremists led by Enver Pasha and the moderates within the Turkish Government. Pasha had actually signed a secret Treaty allying himself with the Germans on 2nd August 1914 — when the Aga was still in East Africa — and though it was another three months before Turkey actually entered the war, the Treaty effectively made Turkey an ally of Germany. The final stages of Turkey's progress to war was marked by the Germans delivering two million Kurus of gold to the Turks, and Enver allowing the German Fleet to attack the Russians with such devastation that the Russians were forced to declare war. The Russians declared war on 2nd November 1914 — and it was then that the Aga began to play a role for Britain. The same day he issued what became known as the 'Aga Khan Manifesto'. He condemned Turkey for declaring Jihad — a holy Islamic war — and he warned her that she had 'drawn her sword in an unholy war from which she could be but ruined whatever else happened': and she would lose her position as a great nation for 'such mighty sovereigns as the King Emperor and the Tsar can never be defeated.'

The next day, arrangements were made to have the Manifesto published in India, the Colonies and in London. The Aga sought a world audience; he said he had followers in Russia, Syria and the far corners of the earth. The Foreign Office were quite eager to distribute the Manifesto wherever the Aga suggested. But their knowledge about the Aga was rather poor; they thought he was still president of the All-India Muslim League and they did not even know how many Indian Muslims he represented. The Foreign Office news telegram forwarding the Manifesto vaguely mentioned that he spoke for millions of Indian Muslims and asked the India Office to fill in the exact number. All this was necessary to establish the Aga as a rival to the Sultan of Turkey's claim to represent the Muslims, and the Kaiser's claim to be their protector.

Cairo was instructed to print 10,000 copies in Arabic; Petrograd and Sofia were to have 5,000 copies printed in the languages spoken in those countries. Copies were even distributed in France and Italy, where there were very few Muslims and where even the Aga never claimed any followers. In Russia the Manifesto did have an impact — at least in official circles. The Russians had their Muslim publicist who was challenging the Sultan of Turkey's claim to represent Islam and the Petrograd newspaper *Noveo Vremya* said the Aga's appeal would disenchant Berlin diplomacy. As ever, the official British view was in *The Times* which was convinced that the Aga's appeal had defeated the German plot. Interestingly, *The Times* now spelt the Aga's name without an 'h'. In the past, 'Aga' and 'Agha' had both been popular with the paper's sub-editors — from now on the Aga's name was to take its modern spelling.

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Lesser men might have been satisfied with such a position, but the Aga, who

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shared the restlessness that characterized his grandfather Aga I, could not be just a mere publicist. He was also aware that whatever *The Times* said, he was by no means the number one Muslim in India. The Aga had always encouraged his followers to liken him to the Pope. His followers' telegrams to the British Government, denouncing Turkey, invariably referred to the Aga as 'a holy Pope'. But other Muslims did not treat the Aga with such reverence. A few days after the Aga's Manifesto was published, the *Islamic Mail*, a Muslim paper printed in London, expressed similar loyalties to the Empire and in doing so pointed out that the Nizam of Hyderabad, one of the first Indian princes to support the British, was 'the real leader of the Indian Mussalamans.'

The Nizam was a Sunni, as were most of the Indian Muslims, and this religious link reinforced the Nizam's position as one of the leading Indian princes. For the Aga, who had often heard people refer to the Nizam as the Indian Muslim leader, such public comments merely emphasized his own curious position. He may have been a God to his followers but he had no home, or land. His wealth had allowed him to stay in the greatest hotels in the world, but there was no territory he could claim as his own. The Nizam owed his position to the fact that his predecessors had been shrewd enough to ally themselves to the British and that he ruled a vast Indian State which was of strategic importance. The person of the Nizam, a recluse and a miser, could hardly be compared to the gregarious, smart man-about-town Aga. But to the Aga, all the plaudits of *The Times* and the London salons, could not compensate for what the Nizam had. It was an old Aga Khan family angst: to have land, any land, that they could claim as their own. Aga I, despite his British pension, had pined for the lost land of Kerman. Kerman was out of the reach of his grandson — at least for the moment — but Aga III began to wonder if he could not use his influence with the British to secure an alternative. This search for a land, an Aga country, will from now on feature through our story of Aga III, occasionally surfacing with sudden and unexpected force. The first time it did was a few days after the Aga had championed Britain's cause against Turkey.

Three days after the Aga had written his Manifesto, Sir Edward Grey, the Foreign Secretary, received a rather curious letter from a W. C. Edwards of William C. Edwards & Co, of 64 Mark Lane, London EC4. A couple of years before, Edwards had met the Aga on a voyage and got very interested in his career. Edwards was intrigued by a man who claimed to be a god, was a loyal British subject and clearly a voluptuary who found 'the houris of Paris' irresistible. He appreciated the Aga's wealth and generosity, but lately he had noticed that the Aga was spending a great deal of money trying to secure a place for himself — not a home, nor a castle, but a country where he could rule. In 1914, the idea of a person buying up a state or part of a country, was not all that surprising. It was only a few years since the scramble for Africa, and there were still people alive who remembered European counts and dukes creating their own mini-states on the Continent. But what really intrigued Edwards was whether the Aga's desire for a place of his own could be used to British advantage. The Aga was a

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Shia, the Sultan of Turkey was a Sunni — couldn't they be set against each other? Suppose, Edwards suggested to Grey, it was possible to set up the Aga Khan in Baghdad, or somewhere near the Persian Gulf? Then the Muslims could be divided into two camps of Sunnis and Shias:

> It should be possible that the Aga Khan, who is immensely rich, might bribe the Hierarchy at Mecca with a sufficient sum of money to get himself declared as the true descendant of Mahomet [sic]. Who knows but what he might become a valiant and successful opponent of the Sultan in Constantinople and all his cliques? If so, in a moment all the danger of any serious Mohammedan conflagration might be ended by dividing Islamism in this way.... We know that the whole place in Persia is honeycombed with intrigues from Constantinople and it's just within the range of possibility it seems to us that the Aga Khan might be able to help us to a very considerable extent and at the same time pacify his own ambitions and help us very materially, perhaps in the management of the Mohammedans in the East.

For some curious reason, Edwards felt that the idea must come from the Aga Khan himself. What he wanted was the Foreign Office to approach somebody in the Aga's entourage to get the Aga first to broach the idea, then everything would fall into place. Why Edwards should have added such a rider is difficult to say. It is possible that the Aga actually put Edwards up to this. The intriguing, almost Machiavellian, way the proposal was made smells of an Aga idea with which he had charmed Edwards sufficiently for Edwards to present it to the Foreign Secretary. Nothing came of this, but the Aga was to cling to the idea of acquiring his own country.

There was, in some ways, already a country to which the Aga would often lay claim — Egypt. The Aga's ancestors, the Fatimids, had ruled Egypt nearly a thousand years before, and the Aga would often refer to this period as the most glorious period in the history of Ismailism. This probably explains why the Aga developed such a fondness for Egypt; over the years, in his travels back and forth from India, he invariably stopped off at Cairo. In the winter of 1914, however, his visit to Egypt was special. From 19th December 1914 to 12th January 1915, the Aga, accompanied by Sir Abbas Ali Baig, an Indian Muslim member of the Indian Council in London, travelled over a thousand miles, visiting Ismailia, Suez, Port Said, Tanta, Alexandria and all the camps of the Indian troops. According to the Aga's *Memoirs* , this visit was at the urgent request of Lord Kitchener, with full Cabinet backing — indeed the personal approval and intervention of George V — to help 'clarify and stabilise' Egyptian opinion about the war.

Although nominally Egypt was still part of the Ottoman Empire, Britain had occupied Egypt in 1882 and effectively controlled the country, a control that was to increase during the First World War. Just as war was declared, there was some doubt about Egypt. Ex-Khedive Abbas Hilmi was in Istanbul and remained there, confirming a British suspicion of intrigues

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with the Turks. The British themselves took steps to stifle any possible anti-British opinion by the Egyptians. They sent the Egyptian Assembly on permanent holiday; public meetings and assemblies of five persons or more were banned and, in November, as Turkey entered the war, they imposed martial law.

Lord Kitchener's brief to the Aga, it seems, was that he should gauge Muslim opinion in Egypt and win it over for the Allies. And the Aga and his friend, Abbas Baig, were so successful in this, boasts the Aga, that Egypt remained with the Allies right up to the time of General Allenby's final victorious advance across Palestine and Syria to Aleppo and the foothills of the Anatolian mountains.

Once again the 'Agafacts' and the true facts diverge somewhat. The Aga went out to Egypt at his own expense; he undoubtedly saw Sir Edward Grey and possibly Lord Crewe, Secretary of State for India, before going out. But he wanted police protection in Egypt and, in the eve-of-departure chat at the Foreign Office, suggested immediate annexation of Egypt. There is nothing to suggest that Kitchener asked the Aga to go on this mission — it would have been most uncharacteristic and unlikely. Kitchener had been the British overlord in Egypt until the moment war was declared, when he came to London to become Secretary of State for War. And for a supposedly official Kitchener mission, the Aga and his friend Baig behaved very oddly. The report they submitted at the end of their visit was submitted not to Kitchener but to the India Office and is described as 'an informal expression of our view on some aspects of the political situation in Egypt.' There is no suggestion in it of any sort that it was an official document, or that it had been officially inspired.

It was, of course, a well-written document, which was largely the work of Baig. After a quick gallop through Egyptian society at the beginning of the First World War, it developed into a long paean of praise to Lord Kitchener. Egypt was in good order because of what Kitchener had done during his rule and there was no doubting Egyptian loyalty or its 'present reassuring calm.' The Aga's luck with forecasting was again to be out. Within a year of the report, Egypt was to be in turmoil, with attempts on the life of the Sultan, demonstrations and arrests of extremists.

In fact, about the only concrete thing the Aga had done on this trip was to visit the Indian Muslim troops. Again, the Aga's report on his visit and the true facts differ. According to the Aga's note, the British Generals were worried about the loyalty of these troops as a result of the activities of Turkish agents sowing the seeds of Islamic doubt. The Aga valiantly offered to set their minds at rest and visited the troops and the officers at their respective camps. After the usual formalities, 'native officers' were assembled in groups and the Aga addressed them in Urdu, 'meeting the misconceptions arising out of the Turco-Germany intrigues point by point according to the Shariat and Islam doctrines.' There was much reference to the British sarkar — meaning the Raj — the need for Muslims to be 'true to the salt of the sarkar' and the guarantees given by the British, Russian and French governments both with regard to religious freedom and the 'inviolability of the Holy Places.'

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The Aga saw this as a particularly crowning moment of his trip to Egypt — but an Indian officer reported to Hardinge that the Aga had made rather a fool of himself. He had worn a straw hat with a ribbon and European clothes; he had spoken mostly in poor Urdu and lapsed, every now and again, into English, and the troops had been most unimpressed. Many of them had openly laughed at him. Hardinge reported all this with malicious glee to Crewe though not, of course, to the Aga. In a separate letter to the Aga, Hardinge praised his and Baig's efforts and also, pointedly, pulled up the Aga on several factual inaccuracies. One of these concerned the question of the Caliphate, and Hardinge, with great delight, set the Aga right on this question. A good deal of Hardinge's diplomatic life had been spent in Muslim countries and he probably knew more about their customs than the Aga. He was not slow to make this known. But all this was still padded in elaborate courtesy and, to his face, the Raj's officials kept up the fiction that the Aga was useful: privately they had begun to find him comic.

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Chapter 13

Searching for Honours

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With his Egyptian affairs concluded, the Aga headed for India. He had not been to India for over a year, though with his mother's Moto Punth in good running order, he had little worry about his followers or their regular donations which made up his wealth. But though his followers made few demands on him, the essential relationship between the Aga and the Khojas required that he occasionally gave them his 'Didar' — holy sight. The Aga found such rituals quite taxing. Once, walking in Cairo with an English friend, a Khoja follower approached him and prostrated himself at the Aga's feet. The Aga blessed the man and, turning to his English friend, said 'there, you see, being a God is not all beer and skittles.'

In Bombay, the ritual was even more ornate. It meant ceremonial occasions at the Aga Hall in Mazagoan, living in a family atmosphere which was still ruled by the iron hand of Lady Ali Shah, and in general a return to the suffocatingly closed world he had tried so hard to escape from. It was fifteen years since he had abandoned Bombay for Europe, and the stuffy nature of that Colonial society had not changed. It was worse — Bombay, after Europe, was a constant reminder of his own position. Publicly, the Aga was by now one of Bombay's favourite sons. Soon after he arrived on this trip, the *Times of India* carried a long article eulogizing the Aga. Not only did he love Islam and was 'part and parcel of Islam', said the paper, but the Aga's alliance with Great Britain revealed his vision. Following in the footsteps of his Ismailian predecessors who had allied with King Richard and the Crusades, he had rightly judged that the decay of Muslim states could only be reversed with the help of Britain.

But while such public plaudits were very useful, the Aga knew that in Indian society they meant little. In India, his political importance counted for nothing in the Raj's pecking order. He had no land, he was not a prince and often ranked below the pettiest of Chiefs. The various Ruling Chiefs had titles and guns of salute, according to their importance and their previous service to the British. The Aga had to rely on his personal charm and influence and while this worked well enough, as in George V's Durbar, when he was treated as a Ruling Chief, it did not carry over into ordinary Indian life. In this world where the District Collector ruled, the Aga was just another educated Indian. His followers may have thought he was a

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God, and friends and relations liked to call him 'Prince', but the Collector went strictly by the book. This, as the Aga would confess to the Viceroy, often put him 'in a false position', even 'humiliated' him before his followers. They could not understand how their God could be treated so casually by relatively minor British officials.

The Aga somehow endured this visit to India in the summer of 1915, but returned to Europe with some definite plans.

Although the carnage of the First World War was already on its way, pre-war London society still ruled and, as Raymond Asquith told Edward Horner in April 1915, 'life is much as you remembered it.' The Aga had to make no changes to his regular summer-time shuttling between England and France. On 1st July he arrived in London from France, on the 5th he had lunch with the King and Queen, three days later he was received by Queen Alexandra — and by the end of the month he had departed to the South of France and Switzerland. In October, having just celebrated his birthday in the South of France, the Aga returned to London and set about trying to rectify his 'ambiguous' position.

On Saturday, 11th December 1915, on the notepaper of the Marlborough Club, the Aga typed out a long letter to the Viceroy:

> I claim no reward: but I do ask that in view of the influence for good I am able to wield, my status should be sufficiently defined ... my status should be made definite in general, instead of occasional and uncertain, by my being given a salute of eleven guns and placed with eleven gun Ruling Chiefs. I beg your Excellency to recommend this honour before you leave India, and I ask for eleven rank precedent guns, only since this will not advance the precedents I am already accorded on state occasions by courtesy. It cannot therefore occasion any sense of grievance on the part of Ruling Chiefs receiving the same or higher salutes.

Such honours usually went to those who ruled over territories — but the Aga generously waived any claims to territorial sovereignty and provided a precedent. Sir Salar Jung, Prime Minister to the Nizam of Hyderabad, had been granted such honours in recognition of his great help during the Indian revolt of 1857. Much closer to the Aga's time, the Regent of a Rajput state had also been honoured with a salute of seventeen guns. But deserving as these men were, the Aga argued that his case was even stronger, for his services had covered a much wider field and, surely, the First World War was the greatest crisis that had ever faced the Raj and the Empire.

Just in case the Viceroy had forgotten, the Aga now re-told his many services to the British Empire. The letter concluded on a sulky note: if the Government were not to give him the honour he wished, they might as well 'take away my "HH" from me so that I may take my place as a private citizen.' Hardinge was shortly to leave India and, whatever he may have thought about the Aga in private, he was not averse to recommending some honour for him. On 29th February 1916, the Viceroy cabled the India Office that he recommended a salute of eleven guns and the rank and status

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of the First Class Bombay Chief for life. However, Hardinge refused to accept the Aga's request for a permanent salute as he was not sure of succession, or the four extra guns that he wanted as a personal distinction. In London, Sir Arthur Hertzel, was just as receptive:

> The Aga Khan naturally does not understate his services. But undoubtedly both inclination and enlightened self-interest put him on the side of the Government, and on that side he has worked with pretty consistent loyalty and at the cost of entire loss of popularity and consequently influence with the extreme young Muslim party.... It is intelligible that he should find his unrecognised status uncomfortable and that his followers would not understand it. A signal reward will be appreciated not only by them, but by moderate Muslims who, though they may regard him as a heretic, recognise that he is more of a statesman than any of them. On the other hand, it will widen the breach between the young Muslims and himself but that breach can only be narrowed by his moving towards them, which might be the effect of not gratifying him.

Unlike his grandfather who had bombarded the Government with requests for money and honour, the third Aga had been less greedy. In his letter to Hardinge he made a virtue of the fact that he had never before asked the British Government for anything and the India Office appreciated this. On 24th March 1916, Austen Chamberlain, forwarding the recommendation to George V, stressed the Aga's valuable political services and the fact that an honour like this would have a considerable effect not only on his own Khojas, but other moderate Muslims 'by whom he is esteemed for his statesman-like qualities.'

And having decided to give the honour, the British did it with some grace. On the advice of his officials, Austen Chamberlain wrote a personal letter to the Aga on 31st March 1916 informing him with great pleasure that the King Emperor had 'been graciously pleased' to grant the coveted honour. No mention was made in the letter of the fact that the Aga had originally begged for the honour. The official press release was just as bland, and *The Times*, suitably coached by the India Office, reported on 13th April 1916 on the 'exceptional honour' conferred upon the Aga. To the great British public it was presented as a nice but merited surprise, and the Aga, in his *Memoirs*, continued the fiction. In this version of 'Agafacts', the honours were credited to a 'most generous and thoughtful action on the part of the King.' *The Times*, in reporting the honours, used the very words that the Aga had employed in his begging letter to Hardinge to justify his request. Comparing the precedent of the honours given to Sir Salar Jung, the Aga had told Hardinge:

> It has fallen to me to serve in vastly wider fields, to exert much more than a local and provincial influence in a crisis of British rule even greater than that of 1857.

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The India Office — or perhaps even the Aga Khan — must have passed this letter on to *The Times* for it reproduced the above paragraph exactly as the Aga had written it, except for substituting the name Aga Khan instead of 'me' as used by the Aga. Almost forty years later, with an irony that must have struck even the Aga, the Khoja chief, recollecting the honours he had received, reproduced *The Times*' version of his own words — or perhaps his 'ghost' did.

The announcement had been carried in *The Times* and other newspapers of 13th April. From 16th April — until well into the second week of May — messages poured into the Raj's officials from various Khoja communities of India and East Africa. They were almost identical telegrams, expressing their heartfelt thanks for the honour that had been bestowed on their chief. At the final count, thirty-three such telegrams and messages were received — demonstrating how well the Aga could orchestrate his own community. In our day and age we have become accustomed to American presidential advisers announcing telegrams of support reaching the White House. Long before this had become part of political vocabulary, the Aga had fashioned his own telegrams of support.

Despite the honours, questions of rank and precedent continued to dog the Aga for many years. On 17th May 1922, the India Office sent an urgent telegram to the Viceroy in Simla. The Aga appeared Number 41 in the Bombay provincial order of precedent. Should he not have precedence at ceremonial functions over all Bombay second class chiefs? After hurried consultations, the Viceroy realized that the local Bombay Government had made a mistake. The Aga should not have ranked Number 41, but Number 17 in Bombay provincial order precedence, just below the eleven-gun first class chiefs and immediately after Janjira. Another crisis had been averted. In fact the family would continue to be obsessed with rank and honour, as we shall see.

Despite the pain and humiliation that his visit to India had brought, the Aga still had time for high politicking. He had arrived in India, just as Gokhale was dying. Curiously, the two men had remained good friends and Gokhale was planning to discuss some ideas with the Aga. Two days before his death, Gokhale was actually to pencil a document outlining some of these ideas, a document that was to be called his Political Testament, though Gokhale's biographer disputes this and suggests that it was not more than a scheme, drawn up at the request of Lord Willingdon, the Governor of Bombay, who had a long chat with the Aga about his experiences and urged Gokhale to discuss his ideas with the Aga. Whatever the status of the document, the Aga soon found himself as the sole heir to it. Gokhale wanted to discuss the ideas with his old friend, Pherozeshah Mehta, but he, too, had died within a few months of Gokhale. It is not clear who christened this document Gokhale's 'Political Testament', possibly the Aga, though for a month the Aga pondered over Gokhale's ideas.

Then, in March 1915, he thought of a way he could use them to further his own plans. The Aga may already have been aware that Government intelligence sources had got hold of a copy of the document, and that

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Hardinge didn't much care for Gokhale's ideas. In any case, the Aga now decided unilaterally to modify Gokhale. He retained the central plan of Gokhale's theme: the provincial autonomy idea, but he disregarded Gokhale's suggestions that the Government of India was to be freed from the control of the Secretary of State for India, Gokhale having hoped that the Secretary of State for India would occupy a position similar to that of the Secretary of State for the Colonies. The Aga also buried Gokhale's proposals to abolish the India Council in London; in its place, the Aga proposed better communications between the Princes and the Imperial Government through a series of conferences. He also made a number of other suggestions: commissions to Indians in the Army and the Navy — when it was created — and that after the war German East Africa be reserved for Indian colonization, and that old chestnut about a younger son or brother of the Sovereign being appointed Viceroy in India.

On 7th March 1915, the Aga submitted these proposals to Hardinge. He did not mention Gokhale as the source from which these proposals arrived, but presented them as his own work. Hardinge, who quickly recognized that these proposals were a modification of Gokhale's, did not particularly like them. In fact, he thought they were 'mostly rubbish', though in the usual way a copy winged its way to Lord Crewe. By the time the Aga returned to England in the summer of 1915, Austen Chamberlain had replaced Lord Crewe as Secretary of State for India, and he was no more enamoured of the Aga's ideas than Hardinge. He successfully persuaded the Aga that these proposals would do his reputation more harm than good — and the Aga quietly withdrew them. He did not, however, forget them.

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Chapter 14

Britain's Islamic Champion
Part II — The Intrigues

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In his letter to Hardinge asking for an eleven-gun salute, the Aga had mentioned his exploits in Switzerland in the summer of 1915. He claimed that he had gone there on his own initiative and at his own expense to study German plans and intrigues and collect information from his followers in Persia and Mesopotamia who, for some reason, could only write to him in Switzerland. The Germans and the Turks, according to the Aga, were so worried about him that they made plans to assassinate him and were only foiled by British Secret Service agents who warned the Aga.

As ever, the Aga was embroidering — just a bit. As the India Office discovered, the Aga had gone to Switzerland to look after his own private business. Switzerland, then as now, was a most useful financial centre and in the years before the First World War, the Aga had used the country's financial system to collect money from his followers. The Aga was involved in German plots, but these were not plots of the German Government, more the work of a shadowy organization called the Indian Independence Committee based in Berlin, and master-minded in Switzerland by a German Jew called Jacoby. Though little has been written about it, the German First World War spy ring in Switzerland, centred around Berne and run by Jacoby, was much the most intriguing. Jacoby controlled a whole network of agents who operated throughout Europe, and one branch of the network concerned Indians. Most of the Indians, as we have seen, responded to the call of the Empire in danger, but there were a few — a small minority — who saw England's peril as India's hour of deliverance. It was a minority that acted in various parts of the world; on the west coast of America, in Afghanistan, where an actual provisional government of India was set up, and in India itself. Even before the war, as Anglo-German relations deteriorated, these Indians had looked to Berlin for help. Soon after the First World War, the Indian Independence Committee was organized there.

With Britain championing the Aga as their Muslim leader, the Germans had to respond. They had reacted with predictable scorn to the Aga's Manifesto denouncing Turkey and Germany in November 1914. By December the German Consul in Turkey was reporting that local papers were denouncing the Aga as having no relations with Islam.

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But the Germans kept a close watch on what the Aga was doing. In the summer of 1915, as he shuttled between France and Switzerland, Jacoby's agents reported on his activities. In September 1915 the Aga returned to Switzerland and took up residence at the Villa Pourtale in Versoix, near Geneva. The Germans were particularly interested to find out if the Aga was likely to get involved with the ex-Khedive of Egypt, Abbas Hilmi, who had defected to the Turks soon after the war began. The Aga, Jacoby's agents reported, preferred to mix with Persian and Spanish princes whom he freely told that, while he had no fears for England in this war, he thought France and Russia were doomed. France's only way out was to pay the Germans the reparations, admit 'that she had made a fiasco of her Russian politics and introduce a new policy directed against Russian barbarians.'

Jacoby's agents had actually missed a trick. The Aga had met the ex-Khedive, who it seems, wanted to use the Aga to get back into British favour. The ex-Khedive told the Aga that he had now quarrelled with his German and Turkish friends, but the Aga shrewdly suggested that any peace overtones be made through the British Minister at Berne. He was more intimately involved with the Persian princes, for the Aga had begun to develop some plans for his ancient homeland. When, a few weeks later, he left Switzerland for England, he unburdened himself of these plans to the Foreign Office.

On 24th October 1915, the Aga had lunch with Lord Robert Cecil, Parliamentary Under-Secretary in the Foreign Office. In the course of the lunch the Aga Khan told Lord Robert Cecil his schemes for Persia. It was at the time a subject of growing concern to the British. Soon after the war had broken out, Persia declared herself to be a neutral, but this counted for little with the British, Russian, Turkish and German military forces who operated in the country. For the British, Persia was still very much part of their sphere of influence: the outermost wall that secured India. If during Rawlinson's time Britain's enemy in Persia was Russia, now it was Germany. Throughout 1915 — and for much of the war — against a constant backdrop of German intrigues matched by British counter-intrigue, the British, Turks and Russians fought a number of battles in Persia. By the end of that year, the Germans and the Turks had scored some notable successes, forcing the British to make a humiliating retreat from the various consulates, which in fact were military outposts.

The German victories had alarmed the Aga and he was now convinced that they would soon reach Constantinople, and such would be the depth of anti-British feeling in Persia that the Turks would be able to march an army through it into Afghanistan and India. He wasn't quite sure what the solution should be, but he had several ideas. He told Cecil that one idea would be to partition Persia, the British taking the South and the Russians the North. But even the Aga recognized that this would be highly immoral. The other solution was a joint Russian-British guarantee of Persia's integrity, with Persia being given money to reorganize the country with the help of American officials and gendarmes. He preferred the Guarantee-plus-American idea, but was willing to go along with the partition plan if

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that was the only alternative. In the sort of unflattering estimation of people and nations that the Aga was now getting quite good at, he told Cecil: 'It is no use bribing people here and there or taking any half measures. The Persians would merely take bribes from us and the Germans, and then do whatever they thought right or expedient.'

Neither of the Aga's plans fared very well at the Foreign Office. Cecil could not understand why the Persians would accept a Russian guarantee, but the Aga, curiously, reasoned that the Persians so hated the Russians that they would accept a guarantee from them. But as far as the British guarantee was concerned, the British had been guaranteeing Persian independence for some time (this meant Persia independent of other powers but beholden to the British). It had been done as recently as the 1907 convention. How would a new guarantee help? And what was the Aga's time scale in all this? All this would surely take some months to set up. The Aga was convinced that Germany would not move for another six months. And when one official asked what the British and the Russians were to do with the Germans already active in Persia, the Aga, quite casually, said 'just send them away'. An official noted 'easier said than done'. The Aga's idea of associating the Americans merited even greater scorn. The Americans had been involved in earlier plans in Persia and the Foreign Office were not sure they would be interested, 'and in any case, Americans are not very suitable for reorganising a decadent and corrupt Eastern administration.'

On 2nd November 1915, the Aga met the Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, and suggested a direct deal with the Russians. Let them have Constantinople in return for renouncing all claim on Persia. As always, he was convinced that Muslim opinion would accept this and this would prevent the Persians from going over to the Germans. The Russians, as we have seen, occupied parts of Persia but the Aga, in effect, wanted them to give up what they had in the hope that one day they would get Constantinople. Though a month earlier Britain, France and Russia had actually signed an agreement known as the Constantinople Agreement which acknowledged the Tsar's claim to the Ottoman capital, Edward Grey did not let on about these secret treaties (it was the Russian Communists who blew the gaffe on these treaties when they took power in Russia in 1917) but told the Aga that the Russians could hardly be asked to 'give up certain definite things now in return for promises ... which could not be fulfilled at the moment.'

The Aga, however, was not deterred. He actually had a candidate as a possible ruler for Southern Persia: a Persian prince called Zill ul-Sultan, the eldest son of Nasir-ed-din Shah, one of the Qajar Shahs who had ruled Persia between 1848 and 1896. There was some irony in the Aga wanting to help Zill, since Nasir had been the boy king who had succeeded Muhammed Shah, the man the Aga's grandfather hated so cordially. Zill had now fallen on very bad times. In the 1880s he had been the most powerful governor of much of Southern Persia, and a great friend of the British. This friendship had proved his undoing. In 1887, when the Viceroy had awarded him the most Exalted Order of the Star of India, his father, furious at not being

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consulted, had stripped his son of most of his powers. Zill had to secure limited assurances of protection from the British in order to survive in his own country. As Jacoby's agents had reported, the Aga had met Zill in Switzerland and was converted to his cause. The Aga may have thought that with Zill as ruler of Southern Persia, including Kerman, he would fulfill his grandfather's old dreams of recovering lost land. He had mentioned Zill to Lord Cecil during their lunch and renewed the cause on 9th January 1916.

But in the Foreign Office the idea of the Zill, old, broken, full of the wonders that might have been rather than the glories to come, as a *deus ex machina*, raised scorn and mirth in equal proportions. One Foreign Office official had a chat with Nasir ul-Mulk, the first Persian to enter Oxford University and whose Balliol contemporaries included Edward Grey, Cecil Spring-Rice and George Nathaniel. No, said Nasir ul-Mulk, the Zill of today is not the Zill of twenty years ago.

Curzon, the expert on East Asia, inevitably vetted these proposals and he bluntly minuted: 'I prefer his (Nasir ul-Mulk's) knowledge of Persia, the Persian princes, all of whom he knows personally and has been associated with for thirty years, to that of the Aga Khan who can know very little of the Zill in the old days ... and not much more now.' Curzon had his own plans for what he called the regeneration of Persia under British tutelage, but for these he required neither Zill Sultan nor the Aga.

One of the reasons for the Aga's preoccupation with Persia — apart from his natural longing for his lost homeland — was because of his distrust of the Arab revolt against the Ottoman Empire. When he had met Sir Edward Grey on 2nd November 1915, the Aga had warned him that it would be a 'great mistake' for the British to get mixed up with any movement that set up an Arab Khalifate. Sir Edward had explained that the British support for an independent, autonomous Arabia was based on political and secular grounds, and religious questions such as the Khalifate should be settled by Muslims themselves. This did not reassure the Aga. He easily pictured a situation when the Arabs in the Sudan and Egypt might set up an Arab Khalifate in opposition to the Turkish Khalifate, which, the Aga warned Sir Edward, would be viewed with considerable concern by Indian Muslims who were emotionally committed to the Turkish Khalifate. But in all this there was a particular Aga worry, a sectarian Shia worry. As far as he was concerned, the Arabs had no claim to Baghdad and the region and the shrine of Kerbala ought to be given over to Persia.

This was the Persian Shia coming out in the Aga Khan. Though, as we have seen, he could be critical of the Persians for persecuting his own Khojas, in many ways he shared the old Persian distrust of the Arab — distrust that can be seen even today in the Iran and Iraq war. And the shrine at Kerbala was one of the holiest shrines of the Shia world.

The British had already realized that the Aga and Arabs were like oil and water. A confidential agent of the Political Department of the India Office had warned:

> One of my informants who is well in with the Mahommedans, writes and

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warns me not to allow HH the Aga Khan to associate in any way with Prince Faisul or concern himself in the least degree with the new kingdom of the Hediaz. My informant tells me that the Aga Khan is regarded as 'the heretic of heretics' by Mahommedans in general.

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The early months of 1916, however, brought the Aga joy. After spending the first part of the winter, as ever, in the South of France, he returned to England in March and a luncheon given by the King and Queen at the Palace. A new edition of the Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám was being translated, and the Aga contributed a foreword. He went back to the Continent in the middle of March and there, as we have seen, he received the good news from Austen Chamberlain that his request for a salute of eleven guns and the rank of Chief of Bombay Presidency had been granted by the King. The Aga returned to London on 14th April to receive the honours, and once again play the public part of Britain's Islamic champion. Turkey, he declared in a public message to Indian Mohammedans, had betrayed Islam. Soon after, the Aga travelled back to the South of France and there broke his ankle. It is not exactly clear how he broke his ankle; probably playing tennis somewhere in the South of France he twisted it severely and, though the injuries seemed minor, it required an operation that was rather long and drawn out. The Aga was advised to rest and he chose the Ritz Hotel in Place Vendôme in Paris. The rest allowed him time to reflect, and from there he wrote to his friend Lord Stamfordham, the King's Private Secretary:

> I have purposely loitered on in Europe for months since my return from India because I have not any direct or immediate work now in India, affairs there being on sound foundation, and because I think I may have a job serving His Majesty in Turkish affairs.... Since I got your letter and I saw there is no immediate chance of my being able to serve the Government, I have postponed my return to England and will go on to Nice and wait, in case you ever decide in sending for me. I do not like the idea of travelling for nothing tangible in these days, and taking up the place of useful voyagers on Boulogne boats, not crossing the sea for nothing.

The First World War provided a great many opportunities for lotus-eaters like the Aga Khan. Before the war Europe may have been superficially calm, but it was seething with many peoples and nationalities struggling to break free of the domination of the great powers. War provided them with the ideal opportunity and in his travels in Europe the Aga often met people from what he called 'these unhappy lands'. Mostly they were Persians or Turks, generally disaffected princes or nobles from these countries with their own convoluted plots and plans. But the Aga was now a contact for people from other unhappy lands as well: Poles, Yugoslavs, Armenians, almost anybody in Europe who wanted to use the

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war to free his own country from the domination of the Russian or the Austro-Hungarian Empires. To them the Aga was a magnet.

He promised entrée to the highest circles in England — the most important power in the world. The honours that the Aga had successfully begged for enhanced his already considerable reputation in Europe of a rich Indian potentate. And the Aga, in turn, was a good, faithful listener. As he told Sir Walter, he had time and leisure to study peoples and ideas. And while 'loitering' in Europe he had closely studied many of the current European questions, particularly that of the Poles.

Poland, as ever, was an unhappy country — caught between Germany and Russia. Before the war, Poland was a colony of Russia, but early in the war Germany had driven the Russians from Poland, and for Polish nationalists this provided an excellent opportunity to plot their own country's independence. The Aga had met a certain H. Retinger and impressed him with his 'amazingly thorough' knowledge of the Polish question. Retinger now sought the Aga's help to promote his own Polish plan. This involved an official Anglo-Polish collaboration in order to secure Polish independence. Retinger, proposing the plan to the Foreign Office, suggested the Aga would be an ideal man to act as Poland's representative and liaise between the Poles and the British. For the Foreign Office, this was too delicate an operation: Russia was Britain's ally, and though they recognized that Retinger spoke for a great many people, they could do nothing about it.

The Aga, however, continued to be a conduit for ideas. There was much talk at this time about a negotiated solution to the war, some form of peace talks were actually held under the auspices of President Woodrow Wilson in December 1916 — but they got nowhere. The Aga seems to have been bugged by the idea of a separate peace ever since the failure of the Winston-Churchill-inspired Dardanelles Campaign in the spring of 1915; the disaster at Gallipoli a year later probably strengthened his resolve though when he came to write the letter to Lord Stamfordham arguing this plan, he presented it in a rather convoluted fashion. In the letter, the Aga, offering 'the shortest and safest way to victory in this way', insisted that the Allies should hit the weakest point of the Central Powers: Turkey. They should go either for a 'knock-out blow' or 'a separate peace'. In the Aga's mind there seemed to be no difference between the two but there is just a hint in a very confusing letter that he preferred a separate peace. Either, he argued, would take Turkey out of the war and land her in the Anglo-French sphere of influence.

Characteristically, the Aga did not specify how this knock-out blow or separate peace could be obtained, preferring his usual vagueness: 'I place my experience and knowledge and all I have entirely and fully at His Majesty's, my Master and Emperor's disposal. Please place my full offer of services before His Majesty's Throne steps.'

How much the Aga actually believed in these plans is very difficult to say. On reflection, some of these plans sound fantastic and by now the Aga was capable of believing that his fantasies not only had a grounding in reality

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but were actually working. In the letter to Lord Stamfordham, written a year after Curzon had scorned his Zill plan, the Aga would actually claim credit that his 'humble writings and suggestions' had done much to remove the German influence in Tehran. Perhaps in the midst of war, surrounded by people constantly petitioning him for favours from the British, such Aga fantasies were natural.

All this, however, seemed to exhaust the Aga. Some time in 1916, even as he was recovering from his ankle injury, he began to experience some curious symptoms: his pulse became extremely erratic and, despite regular and fairly substantial meals, he began to lose weight. A Paris doctor diagnosed the problem as Graves' disease, the symptoms of which were protruding eyes and a small goitre. The Aga decided to travel to Berne to be treated by Doctor Kocher, who was considered to be the greatest authority on all forms of goitre. But after a few weeks Kocher concluded that no operation was possible. The Aga lingered in Switzerland for the next eighteen months — almost until the end of the war — hoping to find a cure. As it happened, this was exactly what the Indian Independence Committee operating under Jacoby was hoping for.

Jacoby and his agents had by now gathered a great deal of intelligence about the Aga. Soon after the Aga received his honours, Jacoby had actually interviewed one of the Persian princes he had seen the Aga hob-nob with, Prince Ismail, who was also a cousin of the Aga (their mothers were sisters). Prince Ismail, much to Jacoby's delight, had been suitably scathing about the Aga, denouncing him as a paid agent of the British — he alleged that the Aga received £200,000 per annum from the British Government — and forecasted that, should the opportunity for an anti-British revolution arise in India, then the Aga would be the first to turn against England.

What was more worrying for the Aga's well-being were the activities of one of Jacoby's Indian agents called Harish Chandra. Chandra was one of the most extraordinary spies ever recruited by Jacoby. As a spy he seemed to spend far too much time discussing girls. One of the girls he was associated with was a fair-haired and rather plump, good-looking German with, as Jacoby observed, 'large eyes, largish mouth and thick lips, but a pleasant rounded form.' The girl, Julie Keller, taught in a Berlitz school in Geneva and had fallen hopelessly in love with Chandra, who would spend much time discussing with Jacoby the merits of Julie Keller as opposed to English women, both married and single, whom he had known. Chandra used Julie Keller to inform him about the movements of various Indian supporters of the Raj, including the Aga Khan. Over a period of months Chandra also succeeded in infiltrating Indians and Singhalese servants into the Aga's entourage, and he was now recommending to the Indian Independent Committee in Berlin that the time had come to kill the Aga. That, he argued, would be a warning to the other 'traitors'.

But, in Berlin, the Indians took a different view. Mr Kaul, who was in charge of the German-assisted Indian Independence Movement in Europe,

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reported to Baron von Wesendonk at the Auswärtiges Amt (Foreign Office) in Berlin on 27th August 1916:

> Aga Khan is not a dangerous person at all. He has lost all things. People hate him most bitterly. They do quite the contrary of what he suggests. In fact, the whole political tone in India has changed. Everybody thinks of independence and hate those who profess any kind of loyalty to England.

For some months both the Indians and the Germans debated the Aga. Was he a traitor? If so, how important was he? The Germans had carefully monitored the various ruling princes in India and classified them into pro- and anti-British camps. They could never get a definite idea about the work of the Aga Khan. Interrogation of some captured Indian troops revealed that they did not think the Aga was all that well disposed to the British and, as the Aga's leisurely stay in Switzerland continued, Harish Chandra succeeded in convincing Kaul, and his associates in Berlin, that the Aga ought to be killed. To add to the complications, the British themselves were spying on the Aga. British Intelligence were now convinced that the Germans had infiltrated at least two spies into the Aga's camp: one, the Aga's Indian servant, Hamid Karim, who regularly reported back to Jacoby and Harish Chandra; and the German doctor who attended him at the Swiss clinic.

Publicly, the Germans continued to attack the Aga. When in August 1917, the Aga finally released Gokhale's pencilled notes as his last Political Will and Testament, the German newspaper *Neue Orient* claimed that it was a fake. The Germans also got a Persian to produce a leaflet claiming that the Aga had minimal influence. Nor was Harish Chandra the only agent used. There was X, remarkably persistent, who reported on the Aga's friendship with the Egyptian Yussuf Sadik Pasha. He had illegally sneaked into Switzerland and was living in hiding with a lady friend at the Sanitorium Valmont near Glion. Every now and again, Yussuf emerged from hiding to meet the Aga at the Pavillon des Sports in Montreux. This, along with the Montreux Palace restaurant, was one of the Aga's regular haunts and X dutifully followed the Aga recording and reporting his every move.

Despite all their diligence, X did not seem to have discovered anything concrete about the Aga's activities. However, by December 1917, the Indian Independence Committee in Berlin had finally decided to act. They were now convinced that the Aga ought to be killed. But in one of those stupid moves that often characterized the Indian Revolutionary Movement, a member of the Committee, a Dr Haider, actually wrote to the Aga on 5th December, warning him that the Indian revolutionaries were going to get him. Dr Haider, far from being abashed by this indiscretion, actually exulted in it and reported to the German Foreign Office, the Aga's 'frightened' response: he had hired a special bodyguard who was being paid 30,000 francs to ensure his protection.

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The Aga had also received warnings of German intentions from the British. Like the Germans, the British were a bit concerned about his activities. Back in London Sir Arthur Hertzel, evaluating the intelligence, was rather disturbed by the Aga's hob-nobbing with what he called Oriental 'riff-raff'. There was nothing to suggest that he was actually indulging in anything anti-British and it was decided to warn the Aga about German plots. It is not exactly clear how the Germans wanted to kill the Aga, but according to the Aga's *Memoirs*, a bomb was meant to explode when he visited Lucerne, and his coffee was to be poisoned. The bomb did not go off, and the Aga did not drink the cup of coffee and — warned by the India Office — quickly left Switzerland for Paris.

But the failed, confused plot did do him a great deal of good. In Paris, the medical problems that had dogged him in Switzerland suddenly began to be solved. A doctor diagnosed that he was not suffering from Graves' disease, but a curable disease that did not require the battery of drugs that he had been subjected to. Slowly, he recovered his strength.

Difficult as it is to reconcile the rival versions presented by German agents, the Aga's self-serving memoirs, and the actual realities of the First World War, it is interesting to speculate how little the European powers knew about Muslims, or Asians in general, and the opportunity which this provided the Aga. The Germans, nettled by the Aga's anti-German and anti-Turkish utterances, were easily persuaded that he was at the centre of Britain's Muslim ring. The Aga himself would do much to promote the legend that his widely-spread community, well-briefed and well-oiled, had acted as British agents behind the lines, ferreting information and providing the sort of services that nobody else could provide. How much his small, far-flung communities, ceaselessly persecuted by Turkey and Persia, could have contributed to any British secret work, it is difficult to tell. In 1917, faced by anti-British Turkophile propaganda among the Tartars in the Caucasus, British generals in Tehran tried to get the Aga, Syed Ameer Ali and other Muslims to send telegrams to leaders of the Tartars to try and stem the anti-British tide. How successful these telegrams were we shall never know.

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Chapter 15

The Turkish Fiasco

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Even as the Aga was 'loitering' in Europe, playing the good Samaritan to the Turks, the Persians and the Poles from 'these unhappy lands', events in India were moving. India had made a fantastic contribution to the British war effort and educated Indians expected some reward. Gokhale's death had weakened the 'moderates' and sharpened the political debate in India. Also, the moribund Muslim League had now acquired a new leader. The League was just as unrepresentative of Muslim opinion as it had been during the Aga's heyday: in 1915 and 1916 the League had no more than 800 members, probably as few as 500. And, in 1915, the League had very nearly disappeared. But now it was shrewdly marshalled by a Bombay lawyer called Muhammed Ali Jinnah, an Ismaili whose grandfather had broken with the Aga and actually signed the Anti-Aga Khan Manifesto to Lord Northcote in 1901.

Jinnah, then a moderate, very constitutional Indian Nationalist, had actually allied the Congress with the League at a historic session in Lucknow in 1916, agreeing on a joint platform of constitutional reform. All this was worrying for the British in India and, though for many British administrators in India there seemed to be no alternative to indefinite British rule, they began to give way to pressure from London about the need to define a goal for India. On 20th August 1917, Edwin Montagu, then Secretary of State for India, announced this goal in the House of Commons. Britain would now work so that India could acquire 'self-governing institutions' which would lead to 'a progressive realisation of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire.'

Apologists for the Raj, masquerading as historians, have claimed that the Montagu Declaration meant that the British were serious about giving India independence. This is historical nonsense. The Montagu Declaration was both a compromise and a mistake. It emerged from an over-burdened War Cabinet, unsure of the final victory over Germany, and hoisted by the petard of its own propaganda that the war was won for liberty, democracy and national self government. The British knew that these terms were not meant for India; the educated Indians did not. In fact, the very phrase 'responsible government' which was to cause so much trouble over the next few decades was an alternative to the original phrase 'self government'

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which Montagu had agreed with British officials in India. Both Curzon and Balfour feared the use of the words 'self government' with respect to India. Balfour argued that self government meant Parliamentary government and that Indians, however much they were educated, would never be able to sustain Parliamentary government. Curzon, still smarting from his experiences as Viceroy, feared that self government would mean government in India by the educated classes, particularly lawyers, a people he detested. Curzon thought that Indians might just conceivably be ready for 'self government' in about 500 years. It was he who substituted the phrase 'responsible government' for 'self government'. Though Lloyd George normally disregarded Curzon, he was the acknowledged expert on India in the War Cabinet so this declaration, like the Balfour declaration on Palestine — that followed a few months' later — came into being, meaning many things to many people.

But nobody then saw it as a first step towards withdrawal from India, not even Montagu, who was the keenest supporter of the declaration. It was meant to touch Indian hearts, tie them more closely to the Raj; independence was a word which meant nothing to the Raj. Even Indian Nationalists had not begun to talk of it.

Soon after Montagu's announcement, the Aga had decided that the winter of 1917 would be a good time to visit India. But, as we have seen, he fell ill and the idea of writing a book, first aired with Lord Stamfordham eight years before, suddenly became very attractive. He had nothing to lose. As long as he was an insider, capable of influencing policy, he had preferred the private memorandum, or the odd anonymous article in the *National Review*. Now in exile such private moments of glory were denied to him, and a book seemed a very logical answer. Doctors had told him he could work for two or three hours a day and the Aga now tried to combine the various proposals he had made over the years for Indian reform.

The result was *India in Transition*, sub-titled 'A Study in Political Revolution'. Though published by Philip Lee Warner, publisher to the Medici Society, it was actually printed in India by the *Times of India*. Only 302 pages, it covered a great many subjects, including a section on domestic animals. There were moderate criticisms of British failures in India, particularly with regard to education and sanitary conditions in India. But the heart of the book was his proposal that the reform of India must mean a federal India, with provinces that would have considerable autonomy, and a centre that would be the pivot of a South Asian federation. The Aga saw such a federation extending from Aden to Singapore, combining economics, commerce and intellectual thinking. There were also old favourites like the Prince Regent idea, first developed with Sir Walter, and a case for allowing Indians to expand in German East Africa.

It was clearly meant to influence the detailed proposals that were to clothe Montagu's announcement, though the structure and the style suggested that the Aga had a much wider audience in mind. In those days, Indian politicians did not write a great many contemporary books. Most books on India were written by Englishmen eager to tell their countrymen

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and women at home what things were like in this, the brightest jewel in the crown. The Aga, too, seemed to have a similar audience in mind, and the book did provide him with a literary reputation, however fleeting. He also quite impressed Lady Diana Cooper with his 'cleverness' — though she did wonder whether the Aga had actually written the book.

Whether the Aga employed a 'ghost' or not, it was important that he release the book at just the right time — August 1918 — as Montagu was busy working out with Chelmsford, Viceroy in India, legislative proposals that were to carry the two men's names. The foreword to the book began with a long, unctuous passage praising Montagu, his statesmanship and his 'zeal and devotion in promoting the welfare of India.' Montagu needed all the support he could get and was eager to welcome the Aga. It was undoubtedly an odd friendship: Montagu, a Jew, and the Aga, supposedly one of the leaders of the world's Muslims.

But Montagu had a most curious position in the British Cabinet. He had been appointed Secretary of State in July 1917 partly by accident, following the resignation of Austen Chamberlain over the Mesopotamia affair, and partly a political calculation on the part of Lloyd George who wanted to wean Montagu away from his old mentor Asquith. At the India Office, Montagu soon became the Jew in the Gentile Indian woodpile, and a few years later, just before he was sacked, there were public expressions of anti-Semitism in the House of Commons about him. To the old India hands, Montagu began to develop the most suspect of attitudes: an Englishman who cared too much about India. Officials noted that he did not have the rigid, aloof bearing of Austen Chamberlain, the ideal that was held up to all the Raj's administrators. Montagu was a bit too much like the Indians: highly strung, nervous, sensitive, inefficient at business and too inclined to put down the first thought that came into his head. That such views about him were held then is not surprising; what is really interesting is that these are also the considered views of the Raj's historians, and Sir Algernon Rumbold, a man who served in the India Office between the wars and has written a history of the 1914-22 period, endorses this historical picture of Montagu.

But to Indians who supported the Raj, Montagu was like a breath of fresh air. For the Aga it was wonderful to have a Secretary of State who actually listened to his ideas. In the past, as we have seen, neither Hardinge nor Chamberlain had had much time for the Aga's proposals. Montagu was different. He was very impressed with the Aga, who seemed to be that rare Indian who had travelled widely about the world, could present a Muslim point of view on various sensitive Middle Eastern issues and, as he put it to Lloyd George, was 'uniquely informed about international politics.' Yet it was Paris and an international conference that brought the Aga and Montagu politically close together.

In January 1919 the victorious powers, their allies and various hangers-on, assembled in Paris for the greatest such gathering seen in the world — one even more representative than the Congress of Vienna in 1814. The purpose was to decide the shape of the post-war world, though

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none of the ex-enemy states or even the neutrals were present. India was in a curious position. Politically, it was securely part of the British Empire, but it had representation on the Imperial War Cabinet and, largely as a sop to Montagu, Lloyd George had agreed that India could sign the Peace Treaty separately, become a member of the League of Nations and even send two delegates to the peace conference — the dominions of Canada, Australia and South Africa also sent delegates. This was somewhat absurd since India was far from being a dominion. The two Indian delegates were the Maharaja of Bikaner, a man the Aga had praised in extravagant terms in his book, and Lord Sinha, the first Indian to be nominated on the Viceroy's Executive Council — and the man whose position the Aga had once coveted. But both of them were Hindus, and Montagu slowly awakened to this realization.

Some time in the second week of January 1919, the Aga met Montagu in Paris and worked his charm with him. On 17th January 1919, Montagu suggested to Lloyd George that he ought to meet the Aga for an hour or two, or even dine with the Aga and Montagu. There was a personal interest in this. Montagu had now begun to propose his own name as Viceroy in succession to Chelmsford. The detailed working out of the legislative plan to follow up his House of Common's announcement was going badly, Montagu's relations with Chelmsford had deteriorated and the Raj in India had begun to detest Montagu. Montagu felt that the best thing to do would be to go as Viceroy to India to see that the reforms were properly implemented.

But how would the Indians react to such a proposal? Montagu was a Jew, and the Secretary of State recalling a Viceroy and replacing him was almost revolutionary. Lloyd George decided to sound out the Aga and Sinha and invited them to dinner, but without Montagu. It was a curious dinner. Lloyd George, sceptical, and both the Aga and Sinha determinedly meeting every objection to Montagu's appointment. No, they both protested, this was not a question of arguing for a personal reason, Montagu was really 'head and shoulders above anyone else.' (Interestingly, in his *Memoirs*, the Aga did not recollect his advocacy of Montagu as Viceroy of India, but mentioned the occasion when Lloyd George asked him who would make the better Viceroy in India, Lord Derby or Winston Churchill. The Aga plumped for Winston Churchill).

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By May 1919, the Paris Peace Conference had begun to consider the Turkish problem and Montagu was hurriedly summoned by Lloyd George to represent the growing Indian Muslim fears about allied plans. Montagu decided that in addition to Bikaner and Sinha, the Indian delegation should be accompanied by some Indian Muslim and he took the Aga along to the conference. The Aga, meanwhile, in his very characteristic fashion, had already begun to formulate his own plans. He had got a friend to suggest to Bonar Law that he should be sent to Constantinople as head, or nominal head, or even as a member of an allied commission which could be

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established there to run the city. There had been some talk of a British Mandate on Constantinople; but that the Aga could not very well be part of any such effort, yet argue the case for an independent Turkey including Constantinople, did not strike anybody.

The Aga was also busy doing the social rounds of Paris, and the peace Conference was rich with visitors and their gossip. There was Lloyd George and his fairly open affair with his secretary, Frances Stevenson; Lord Beaverbrook was sharing a suite at the Ritz with Edwin Montagu's wife, Venetia — a silky suite with a common bath and unlocked doors between the two; while Edwin was packed off to stay at the Majestic, unknown and uncared for. In the midst of all this, and to the delight of everybody, the Duchess of Rutland arrived with her daughter, Diana, to distract her from the growing press gossip about her forthcoming marriage to Duff Cooper. The press followed them to Paris, where the *Daily Express* rumoured that Diana had gone to buy her trousseau. The Aga soothed both Diana and her mother by buying them a most memorable dinner. According to her biographer, Philip Ziegler, Diana was so impressed with the meal that she took the trouble to record the menu: emerald green oysters, followed by fine soup upon which floated a marrow bone boiled to a shining ivory, then came soles in sauce and served with them, from great flat dishes, sizzling soft roes. Chickens' wings resting on inky truffles was followed by foie gras and then a dozen fresh green asparagus apiece. The meal was concluded with entrement brie. The Aga, as ever, was the most attentive of hosts, regaling everyone with stories and his good humour. The next day he went for a long walk with Diana Cooper who was greatly worried about how she and Duff might support themselves in married life. The Aga, as he nearly always did, proved a sympathetic and kind listener and by the end of the walk had promised to furnish Diana and Duff Cooper's home, though Diana had had so many broken promises, that she did not think he meant it. In this she was to be proved wrong.

The Aga's socializing mixed politics and the good Samaritan in almost equal measures. Following the dinner with Lloyd George, he had begun an enduring friendship with Philip Kerr, who was also Lloyd George's Private Secretary. Through Kerr's help the Aga had met Polak, the American delegate who was rumoured to be formulating plans for an American mandate over Turkey. The Aga was violently opposed to these plans, and in October 1919, he presented his own counter proposals to Montagu: the United States would find it impossible to rule Turkey; the British may have done it in India, but it had taken some time and the Turks were free and a martial race whose forcible occupation would make the American task impossible and the American public desperately tired of such a role; and the partition of Turkey would be a terrible crime, a wound that would fester with the 'King's Mohammedan subjects.'

The Aga's individual solution flowed from his conviction that Turkey was now deeply anti-German. Two years ago he was convinced that the Turk would always follow his German ideals, now he was equally convinced that Turkey 'execrated' the Germans: 'They may get slaves in Turkey, but

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they will never get friends there.' European parts of Turkey should remain with that country, but now he did not seem to mind so much the Arab part being lopped off and made into mandates of the British and the French.

The good non-conformist Muslim that he was, he did not much care for mosques and did not much appreciate the arguments of the Indian Muslims who were particularly insistent that the Sultan of Turkey as the Khalif of Islam should still control Islam's great holy places. If, the Aga argued, Indian Muslims were still keen that the Sultan should have nominal suzerainty over Mecca or Medina, the holiest of Muslim places, then that could easily be achieved by the Sultan being allowed to send a declaration or a carpet to these places. If Indian Muslims still persisted in their 'mistaken anxiety as to the Arab', then Turks themselves should be used to convince the Indian Muslims.

Montagu was very pleased with these views and circulated them to the Cabinet. But there they received an imperial snort from Curzon:

> I have never had a high opinion of the statesmanship of the Aga Khan. Many of the statements in this paper are open to criticism. But to me the great advantage to British policy to be found in driving the Turks out of Europe and cutting off from the Turkish Empire those parts where the population is purely foreign, is the blow that will be dealt thereby to the Pan-Islamism which, in my opinion, is the only real and latent danger to our rule in India from the Mohammedan population. In India, the Sultan of Constantinople enjoys great prestige as Caliph. Make him live at Brussa or Konia and that would soon disappear. Further, I do not believe in a Mohammedan revolt in India if such a policy were followed. At most the Mussalumans would be sulky.

Unfortunately for the Aga, Montagu now carried little weight in the Cabinet. Lloyd George was getting quite irritated by Montagu's constant championing of the Indian cause and thought that his behaviour at the Paris Peace Conference resembled not that of a Member of the British Cabinet, but of a successor to the Moghul Emperor. Curzon effectively made British policy on Turkey and when the Treaty of Sèvres was signed on 10th August 1920, it was his hard line that had prevailed. Turkey was required to give up Thrace and Smyrna to Greece, the Straits were to be internationalized, there would be close financial supervision of the Turkish government, and east of Anatolia, the independent states of Armenia and Kurdistan were to be created.

In India, however, this 'injustice' to Turkey was already provoking a dangerous mass movement against the British. Gandhi had returned from South Africa and begun to fashion the first of his great civil disobedience campaigns against the British. Shrewdly sensing that the Indian Hindu masses were likely to be roused by religion, he had adopted Hindu religious symbols to fashion the first All India popular agitation. He had also allied himself with the Ali brothers, old adversaries of the Aga, who were orchestrating a Khalifate agitation in India to preserve the powers of the

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Sultan of Turkey. The Aga's worst fears were being realized. As he had often warned Montagu, if Turkey were indeed reduced to an Asian rump, then the effect on the Indian Muslims would be disastrous, the Hindus and Muslims would unite and the Raj would be in real danger. In Amritsar, General Dyer had massacred unarmed Indian men, women and children in the now notorious Jallianwalla Bargh disaster, and India seemed to be tottering on the edge of a precipice. Despite this, the Aga did his best to keep a pro-British party going in India and when Gandhi asked for donations to help the victims of the Amritsar massacre the Aga, fearing it would be seen as an anti-British gesture, refused.

This was his first visit to the country for over five years. There were the usual rounds of his followers and British officials, including George Lloyd, the Governor of Bombay, with whom he struck up a good friendship, and the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford. Inevitably, the Turkish Treaty and its effect on Indian Muslims was discussed. The Viceroy's secretary, Mackie, suggested that perhaps one way of calming Indian Muslims would be to send a delegation consisting of the Aga and a couple of other prominent Muslims, to tour the Muslim holy places and report that they were being well taken care of. Nothing came of these proposals, but the Aga continued his part-private, part-public campaign against the Treaty of Sèvres. And, with Indian Muslim opinion still riding high, Chelmsford decided that a Muslim delegation ought to call on the Prime Minister. On Saturday 12th March 1921, Lloyd George agreed to meet a delegation of Indian Muslims led by the Aga — considerably more moderate than the one led a year earlier by Muhammed Ali.

Though he was leader, the Aga said very little at the meeting. He barely uttered half a dozen sentences — generally of the yes, no, this will not do, variety — in a transcript of the talks that covered just about eleven pages. Most of the talking was done by Hasan Imam, with Lloyd George being charming and totally misleading. He flattered the Indians about their presentation of Turkey's case and charmed them by telling them that while the Turks may be better fighters, the Indians were more eloquent speakers. Exactly twelve days later the Muslims met Lloyd George again. This time there was no Aga Khan (it is not clear why) and once again Hasan Imam did nearly all the talking. This meeting exposed the fact that the Indians had backed themselves into a cul-de-sac.

The Indians' objection to the Treaty of Sèvres was not about the various territorial or financial penalties it had imposed on Turkey, but Article 139 which defined — and limited — the jurisdiction of the Caliph over other Muslims. When Lloyd George pointed out that not even the Turks objected to this article, Hasan Imam retorted that they had come there not to represent the Turks, but the Muslims of the British Empire. Lloyd George could not understand the Indian point, 'after all, the Sultan is their speciality and they have never stated that Article 139 was an interference.'

The discussion should have alerted the Indian Muslims to the absurdity of their campaign. But the Indian Muslims, aroused by the emotional cry of 'Islam in danger', had completely overlooked the political reality of modern

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Turkish politics, and the role of Mustapha Kemal Ataturk. He was leading the Turkish fight against the Greeks, who with allies and Lloyd George's connivance, had occupied parts of Turkish Asia Minor. What the Indians failed to appreciate was that Ataturk was not only against the Treaty of Sèvres, and what the allies had done to Turkey, but he was also against the Sultan of Turkey and all that the Ottoman Empire represented. If the fight against the Greeks, and the eventual emergence of modern Turkey, was a War of Independence it was also, simultaneously, something of a civil war. Ataturk was not fighting to restore the Ottoman Empire; he wanted a modern secular Turkey, and in time the Sultan of Turkey was to condemn Ataturk to death. It was Ataturk's brilliant generalship, and his victories over the Greeks, that, between 1920-1922, slowly forced the allies and Lloyd George to modify their pro-Greek policies, not anything done or said by Indian Muslims.

In fairness to the Indians, it was probably impossible for them to discern all this. A combined war of independence and civil war is not the easiest story to understand, and the Indians were not particularly well informed about Turkey. But shouldn't the Aga, supposedly a well-informed international statesman, and the leader of Indian and international Muslims, have warned his fellow countrymen? Unfortunately the Aga himself was not well informed. This was typically illustrated a couple of months after the London meeting with Lloyd George, in May 1921, when news reached London that in the fighting between the Greeks and the Turks in Anatolia, Ataturk's men had captured some British prisoners. The British once again began to discuss peace possibilities with Ataturk, though this time the proposed talks had an added emotional edge. Curzon, who had begun actively to loathe Montagu and his constant championing of the Indian Muslim cause, now thought that perhaps Montagu's Muslims might come in handy. He wrote to Montagu, asking for Muslim help to secure the release of British prisoners. Montagu turned to the Aga.

The Aga at this time was recovering at the Ritz Hotel in Paris. It is not clear what his ailment was, but he could barely sit up in bed and had to scribble private notes 'with my eyes half shut.' He was, however, eager to help. Six months previously he had made the acquaintance of Bekir Sami Bey, Minister for Foreign Affairs in Ataturk's nationalist government. His meeting with Sami Bey and other Turkish agents in Paris had convinced the Aga that Ataturk and Sami Bey represented what he called 'the moderates' in the Nationalist Party. According to the Aga, these moderates were waging a struggle against extreme nationalists and deserved all the help they could get. So, despite his illness, he drafted a telegram to Sami Bey in which as a 'sincere and lifelong friend of Turkey' he requested Ataturk's government to release the British prisoners. He also suggested that such action would help the Indian Muslims in their fight with the Government to try and secure better terms for Turkey, advising Sami Bey that a policy of friendship with the British would strengthen the hands of Bey, Musapha Kemal 'and responsible leaders against the extremists.' Montagu was quite enthusiastic about the

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telegram and, while Curzon did not think it would do much good, he thought it might not do much harm.

Britain, of course, had no relations with Ataturk's government based in Angora (now Ankara) and had to send the telegram via the British Minister based at the Sultan's government at Constantinople. The Minister was Sir Horace Rumbold, and he was not amused. He did not have the means of sending private messages from Constantinople to Angora, such messages could not be kept private, and if they had to be sent it might have been better to use the French or the Italians, or even the British military authorities in Turkey. Sir Horace did not believe there was a split in Ataturk's Party, nor did he think that the Aga's message would help the moderates; in any case, by the time the Aga sent his telegram, Bey had resigned, and sending the message would only alert Ataturk to the fact that Indian Muslims were exercising an influence over British policy.

Above all, Sir Horace did not think much of the Aga:

> Aga Khan counts for nothing in this country. The few people who have ever heard of him would regard him as a 'tame' Moslem playing the game of Great Britain, but this would not prevent his statement being exploited as propaganda that His Majesty's government was afraid of Indian Moslems generally.

Curzon, who had never much cared for the Aga, readily agreed. But when Robert Vansittart, a Foreign Office official, informed Montagu of this, he was furious. The prisoners were eventually released, though the Aga had nothing to do with it. However, 35 years later, when the Aga came to write his *Memoirs*, he appears to have had a brainstorm. There he would declare, 'the British Government became restive over their demands for the release of certain British prisoners held in Turkey. Over this, at least, I was able by direct intervention and by direct appeal to the new Turkish Authorities, to secure a certain relief in an increasingly critical situation. The Turks released the prisoners, and this crisis blew over.' Maybe, the Aga thought, nobody would look into the files to examine what actually happened.

With the public, and even some Ministers, blissfully unaware of the Aga's role in the prisoners affair, he continued to figure as a possible mediator between the Allies and Kemal Ataturk. Churchill at one stage actually suggested that the Aga or 'someone like him' be sent to Kemal with suitable peace terms. But Lloyd George was not yet ready for peace. The Aga could only wait, hovering on the side-lines and hoping that the call to act as honest broker would come. On 5th November 1921, writing from the Ritz Hotel in Paris, he asked Montagu's advice.

Montagu could do little, his own position in Lloyd George's Government was becoming increasingly impossible. In an isolated and hostile atmosphere, he, like the Aga, was beginning to fantasise, arguing that the concessions offered to the Turks were wholly due to pressures brought by him and others from the Indian point of view. In fact Ataturk and the Turks were fighting their own battle so successfully that, in November 1921,

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the British Cabinet authorized Curzon to persuade the French and the Italians — who had already made their own peace with Ataturk — to make a joint peace approach to the Turks and the Greeks. Curzon set off for France.

Montagu immediately wired the Aga about these moves, and the Aga telegraphed Curzon at Cannes offering him his help. He was prepared to travel anywhere if Lord Curzon so desired. Curzon did not even bother to reply to the telegram. The Aga, nevertheless, decided to be near Curzon and travelled to Nice where he took up residence at the Hotel Atlantic. However, there he fell ill again. Though not known for certain, his illness was probably related to flatulence and excessive over-eating. It was, however, so serious that doctors advised him not to 'get up for more than a few moments' from his bed. Even before he was able to get up and about, the French Government fell, throwing peace plans into confusion. The Aga seemed to be at his wit's end as to what he should do in order to play some part in the Turkish situation.

And, as he lay recovering in the Hotel Atlantic, a great wave of depression enveloped him. For over two years he had pleaded the moderate Indian Muslim cause, in private interviews and in public discussions. He had got nowhere. Gandhi's first non-cooperation movement had swept the country, his alliance with Khilafat Muslims had produced that Raj horror — a Hindu-Muslim unity. The Aga stressed that here was something new. The Aga's entire political position rested on continued British rule in India, and a separate voice for Indian Muslims, a voice at once supportive of the Raj but moderately westernized. But as long as the Indian Muslims were inflamed by what they considered injustices by the West against Turks, there was no place for the Muslim moderate in Indian politics. The Aga decided to visit India, hoping that with the help of the Viceroy and the Raj officials there, he might be able to get his peace act going. He made arrangements to leave for Marseilles on 22nd January.

Even the prospect of a trip to India did little to cheer the Aga. He welcomed 1922 in deep gloom, and writing on New Year's Day he told Beaverbrook, with whom he had just begun to develop a friendship:

> I go to India in a few days' time and in these days of Islamic sorrow and unhappiness and misery no one knows what will happen to a man in my position. So I have sent you as a souvenir [sic] of my sincere friendship and appreciation, a small present with YR and my photo. Keep them both.

Two days before the Aga sailed for India, he decided to make another try. In a long letter to Montagu, written in pencil — as he was not well enough to hold a pen — he proposed that Montagu get the Viceroy to invite him to come to Delhi and help organize Indian Muslim opinion.

Once this was done, the Aga was confident that by April or May, Montagu or the Viceroy could set up a delegation that would complete the final stages of the work.

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In writing the letter, the Aga seemed to have worked out some of his black despair. By the time he had finished writing it, he was more like his old cheerful self and quite confident that Montagu would respond. There were a mere six days left for him to sail for India and he provided Montagu with various alternative places where he could telegraph him: a hotel in Nice, the shipping agents in Marseilles, or failing all that, the Viceroy in Delhi. But Montagu was in no position to send any telegram. He had exhausted himself in championing the cause of the Indian Muslims and Lloyd George no longer required him. The Government had decided it must arrest Gandhi, but before it did so wanted to provide some sop to the Muslims. Montagu and Reading, the Viceroy in India, agreed that the best way to do so would be for the Government of India to send a telegram to the India Office in London, listing various ways in which Indian views had influenced British policy on Turkey. Normally such telegrams would be secret, but Montagu decided that it would soothe Indian Muslims if the telegram were to be published and, possibly contain any explosion that might follow Gandhi's arrest. In the first week of March 1922, with Lloyd George away and Curzon ill, Montagu authorized publication of the telegram. Curzon was, rightly, furious and on 9th March Lloyd George secured Montagu's resignation. The Aga mourned his friend, but in public hedged his bets. In India, he had been advising the Indian people not to despair and, in all honesty, that was about all he could do.

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The Aga arrived back from India in May, but with Montagu gone he noticeably spent less time in London in the summer of 1922 than he had done in previous years. There was a week in London early in June, and then another in late September, but apart from that he spent most of his time in Paris, Switzerland and, his traditional late July-August holiday, in Aix-les-Bains. There, as in previous years, he continued to meet a number of European politicians who had plans for their own countries. One of the more bizarre, though in some ways very Aga-like, plans involved Armenia. The Aga had become friends with a Mr Ahoranian, who had formed a Paris confederation of Armenian commercial interests. Mr Ahoranian was rather keen to have a confederation of Caucasian states under a Turkish protectorate, his worry being that if the Caucasus remained Russian, any independence granted to Armenia would soon prove a fiction: it would be dominated by the Russian Empire. The Aga discussed this plan with James Malcolm, a Foreign Office official in Paris, who utterly opposed it. He did not think the Allies would again allow Turkish Christians to be under the rule of Turkish Mohammedans, and thought that the Aga ought to make a statement on the need for an independent Armenia. Such a statement by a Muslim would do much to help soothe Middle Eastern fears. The Foreign Office in London were quite alarmed when Malcolm transmitted the Aga's views, and his own suggestions. The Aga, one official noted, was 'a very weak reed on which to lean.' He severely rebuked Malcolm for encouraging him.

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Nevertheless, despite his relatively infrequent appearances in the summer of 1922, the Aga was not away from the public eye. In June 1922, reviewing a book about the Prince of Wales' visit to India the previous year, the Aga filled many columns of *The Times* with a re-statement of the traditional loyalist position. In this generally sycophantic verbiage, though no more sycophantic than that coming from very many other Indian loyalists, there was a little nugget of Aga-thinking. He warned his readers not to think that India was all elephants and parades, 'and try and get down to the plain earth.' It was a shrewd point to make, even if the Aga's plain earth did not exactly correspond to the one felt by most Indians.

But if his political calendar was less crowded, the Aga now had time to cultivate his other contacts, in particular Beaverbrook. With Beaverbrook, as with so many of his friends and associates, the Aga developed the rather charming practice of sending little packages of food. To some people he sent mangoes, the rich, golden brown Alfonso which Indians refer to as King of Mangoes. The Aga would generally send a little note along with the mangoes, saying they were from his own garden and he saw this as a cheap, but effective, way of keeping his name in the minds of prominent people. Thus, for instance, the only letters he exchanged with Ramsay MacDonald were the annual ones accompanying his gift of mangoes, and Macdonald's acknowledgement of the receipt of the mangoes. To Beaverbrook, however, he preferred to send pâté de foie gras usually bought in Paris on his way to London. The Aga knew that such gifts meant nothing to Beaverbrook, though the Canadian millionaire professed to be overwhelmed by them, or perhaps the thought of them. But they did establish a certain Aga style. Generally the Aga made these gifts when he arrived in England in May, or early June. And, as with the foie gras to Beaverbrook, they were accompanied by a letter which spoke of his travels in the winter, generally to India and the East. As the Aga wrote to Beaverbrook, 'I know that you like hearing first-hand news and views of the Muslim world.' Beaverbrook knew nothing about the East, never having travelled there, but that summer he was playing an increasingly important role of king-maker in British politics, helping bring down Lloyd George's Government in October 1922. Lloyd George's pro-Greek and anti-Turkish views were to play a prominent part in his downfall and Beaverbrook quite liked the sensation of having an important Muslim card up his sleeve, in the shape of the Aga.

For the Aga, however, long articles in *The Times*, or even a role as the Muslim expert of Beaverbrook, were no substitute for real political action. He missed the close involvement with Montagu, however illusory this may have turned out to be in the end. That summer there was a certain restlessness about the Aga's action. In August of that year, the Aga was staying at the Normandy Hotel in Deauville, the only time in the year when he holidayed with Theresa and Aly. For some years now, the Aga had made a practice of reading the overseas' edition of *The Times* every day. One day a review of documents published by the German Foreign Office caught his eye. They had been reviewed by a British Foreign Office official but, alas for the Aga, the documents were in German, a language the Aga was not

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familiar with. Normally the Aga would have found this of some interest, but more of dinner table gossip among his friends. But that day he rather impulsively wrote off to the Foreign office offering a £1,000 reward towards the cost of publishing these documents in English. The foreign Office were very excited. They had recently formed an Institute of International Affairs, what has now become known as Chatham House, and suggested that the Aga ought to do it through the Institute. The Aga did not think the Institute was independent enough and felt that the Foreign Office ought to gather up fifty or seventy-five rich men in Britain and set up a fund to translate the documents. If that happened, he would contribute a thousand pounds. The Foreign Office was not sure how this could be done and the Aga never had to write out the cheque.

The affair was no more than a passing Aga whim — and by the time it concluded — the Aga had a Turkish role to play. Lloyd George had fallen, and Ataturk's victories against the Greeks made the Treaty of Sèvres unworkable. In November, protracted negotiations began in Lausanne between the Allies and the Turks that were finally to lead, on 24th July 1923, to the Treaty of Lausanne. Ataturk's men had won back almost everything the Sultan's men had lost in Sèvres three years' earlier. The Aga, in his *Memoirs*, would claim that he had 'a watching brief' over these long negotiations. Who he watched for and what his brief was can only be guessed at. The considered historical view is that Curzon did all the negotiating for the British and salvaged what he could from the Turkish men. In fact, the Aga hardly spent any time in Lausanne from the start of the conference in November to its conclusion in July. On 1st December he left for Bombay from Marseilles, leaving Bombay on 27th March. He spent much of May and June in London and was at Deauville (see illustration, page 104) in July when the Lausanne Treaty was signed. The Aga was prompt in issuing a statement supporting the Treaty which was prominently displayed in *The Times* and published throughout India, Egypt, the mandated territories in Africa, Asia and other countries. *The Times* described the Aga as 'the most influential figure amongst the Indian Mussulmans', and the reproduction of the message in the English and Indian-language press in India produced what *The Times* correspondent in India called 'an excellent effect.' It was this that created the myth amongst some Indians that the Aga worked hard for the Lausanne Peace Treaty, a myth that would lead to some rather strange consequences.

The Aga's Lausanne message was actually quite contradictory. He hoped that the Treaty would stop the Khilafat agitation in India, but also argued that the Treaty meant 'the historic Khilafat of Constantinople is maintained.' As the discussion with Lloyd George had shown, the Aga and his Indian Muslim friends had just not kept up with the constant changes that Ataturk was making in Turkey. Even as the Lausanne Conference was being planned in October 1922, Ataturk, angered by the initial Allied invitations to both his nationalist government and the Sultan's government, had abolished the Sultanate and replaced it by an ironic, elected Caliph. It soon became clear to Ataturk that the Caliph who could not rule was no real

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Caliphate. On 29th October 1923, the Turkish Assembly passed a law declaring Turkey to be a republic; Ataturk became the first President, and Ismet Inonu the first prime minister. Ataturk and his men did not seem concerned that there was a glaring contradiction between having a president based at Ankara (Ankara had replaced Constantinople as the Turkish capital a few weeks' earlier) and a Caliph still at Constantinople. However, the inoffensive Abdul-Mejid Effendi, the second son of the former deposed Sultan, might have continued to carry on his meaningless existence in Constantinople had he suddenly not been struck by the Aga's exocet missile.

On 24th November 1923, the Aga and his old friend Ameer Ali wrote a letter to Ismet Inonu about 'the very disturbing effects the present uncertain position of the Caliph-Imam is exercising among the vast population who belong to the Sunni communion.' After a short dissertation on the position of the Caliph among the Sunnis, the Aga and Ameer Ali urged upon the Turkish national assembly, 'and its great and far-sighted leaders the imminent necessity for maintaining the religious and moral solidarity of Islam by placing the Caliph-Imamate on a basis which would command the confidence and esteem of the Moslem nations, and thus impart to the Turkish state unique strength and dignity.' The letter was written in English and duplicates of it were sent to the Turkish press in Constantinople, some of whom had been opposing Ataturk's government.

The result was disastrous for the Aga. The original letter arrived at the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs at Ankara at just about the same time as it arrived at the newspaper offices in Constantinople. Both sent them off for translation, but before a translated text could be placed in front of Ismet Inonu, three Turkish newspapers in Constantinople published the letter. (To add to the fun, the various papers published different translations). Ismet Inonu read the letter first in the papers, and was furious. On 8th December 1923, a secret session of the Turkish Assembly was called to form a special 'Tribunal of Independence', where the editors of the three newspapers, one of the Caliph's men and the President of the Constantinople Bar Association were arraigned. The President of the Constantinople Bar Association was sentenced to seven years, though the editors were subsequently acquitted. Ismet Inonu himself saw this as a cack-handed British plot. The idea of foreigners, and Shia foreigners at that, lecturing the Sunnis on what their religious rights were, was quite intolerable. The fact that the letter was written in English further damned the Aga. The Turkish authorities alleged that the Aga was working in cahoots with the British to try and restore the Ottoman dynasty. Most of the Turkish nationalists had never heard of the Aga, and to them the flapping of the Indian Moslems on the Khilafat question meant nothing. Ismet Inonu would later tell the Turkish Assembly, 'if the Moslems have made a demonstration of friendship towards us Turks, the true explanation of this is not that the Caliphate was in our hands, but that we were known to be strong.'

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The Aga seemed unconcerned that his thoughtless and theologically

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illiterate action had landed three Constantinople editors in jail, facing charges of treason against the Turkish state. He denied that the letter was written at the instigation of the British; he had not discussed the question directly or indirectly with any Englishman, official or non-official. And, in a letter to *The Times*, he declared that far from wanting the return of the Turkish monarchy, he thought that a republican government was 'particularly well suited to purely Islamic society.'

There is no evidence to suggest that the British were behind this letter or, as the Turkish nationalists alleged, the editors had received the letter through the British Embassy. But at least one influential American newspaper, the *Christian Science Monitor*, saw the Aga's letter as a means of getting at Kemal Ataturk's Government.

The Indian Muslims made one last attempt to intervene when, on 1st January 1924, they passed a resolution declaring their confidence in the Turkish Government in Ankara, but expressing the hope that an international congress of doctors of the Islamic law could consider the question of the Caliph. But Turkey itself resolved the question when, on 3rd March 1924, the Caliphate was abolished and Abdul-Mejid Effendi banished. After that everybody concerned was eager to draw a veil on the whole situation. None more so than the Aga, whose *Memoirs* do not contain a single reference to this incident. All he says is that 'for myself, an eventual period of close association with the politics and diplomacy of the Middle East in general, and Turkey in particular, drew to a close.'

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But, ironically, despite the Turkish fiasco, or because of it, the Aga's star cast billing continued to receive a big boost. On 5th February 1924, the Council of State of the Indian Legislative Assembly, set up under the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms, passed a resolution that the Aga Khan was 'the fit person for the Nobel Prize for Peace this year in view of the strenuous, persistent and successful efforts that His Highness has made to maintain peace between Turkey and the Western Powers since the Armistice.' The resolution was moved by Sir Maneckiji Dadabhoy, a Parsee representative from the Central Provinces, but the origins of the resolution remain obscure and the debate was rather curious. It was a non-official resolution, the Government having waived the time limit notice required to be given for such resolutions and allowed discussion of it on a day reserved for government work. Sir Maneckiji and the other supporters of the resolution had consulted the law member of the Government (a sort of Lord Chancellor) Sir Muhammad Shafi, who advised them that in order to be considered for the Nobel prize they needed to pass a resolution to be forwarded to the Norwegian parliament. There had been some talk in the Indian press then of nominating Gandhi for the Nobel Peace prize and, it is possible that some members of the Government had persuaded Sir Maneckiji and others to propose this resolution as a way of derailing any Gandhi nomination. Proposing the resolution, Sir Maneckiji praised the role that the Aga had played at the Lausanne Conference, and managed to

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create a number of 'Agafacts', most importantly the belief that the Aga's intervention had secured the release of the British prisoners of war.

The debate that followed was even more curious. One of the supporters of the Aga, another Parsee member from Bombay, even brought up the old Aga pension to prove how loyal the family had been in the past. Hindu members who supported the resolution did so on the grounds that since the Aga was said to be a great leader of Indian Muslims, therefore he deserved this award; a Muslim member who supported it did so on the grounds that since the Aga was a Muslim, therefore it was good that a Muslim should be getting the prize.

Whatever the Government reasons for allowing the resolution to be passed, once passed it wanted nothing to do with it. The official members of the Government, apart from an explanation given by the law member, had not taken part in the debate and the authorities in Delhi merely saw themselves as a post office forwarding the resolution on to London and, via London to Norway. In London, the idea of the Aga Khan being recommended for a Nobel Prize caused amazement. Sir Arthur Hirtzel observed:

> To anyone who knows anything about the Aga Khan, this recommendation is absolutely ludicrous and I feel strongly that HMG ought not to act even as a post office for forwarding it. The Government of India ought never to have allowed it to be introduced, for it seems prima facie quite wrong for any part of the government of a country to make an official recommendation of this sort. The proper course would have been for the elected members of the Council of State to hold a meeting in their private capacity and forward their resolution through private channels. It is not easy to see how we can get out of it.

The text of the resolution had been telegraphed from Delhi, the reports of the actual debates were posted. When these reached London, and Hirtzel saw the reasons that Sir Maneckiji had advanced for recommending the Aga, he was appalled. In a quite devastating minute he demolished the entire position and standing of the Aga Khan:

> I have the lowest possible opinion of the Aga Khan, both as a man, as a religious leader (save the mark) and as a politician. As a politician he is an opportunist pure and simple — always anxious to be in the limelight on the side which he thinks is going to win, seldom anxious to do an honest piece of work for government in obscurity or unpopularity (he has more than once been offered office under the Crown, but always refused). During the war he did nothing of any note except issue the proclamation ... it was undoubtedly useful, though this loyalty of the Khojas would probably not have been a very great asset if there had been serious trouble in the Moslem world.... His doings on the Continent were entirely private — concerned mostly with his pleasures.
>
> I had him closely watched but the result was only to confirm that he

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was merely an easy-going voluptuary ready to pay for a quiet life.... the Aga had considerable influence with Mr. Montagu and used it in the direction of obtaining easier terms for Turkey in the early stages of the negotiations — again pursuing the recovery of his waning prestige in the Indian Moslem World.... And if the Nobel Prize is awarded on these grounds, I consider Mr Montagu has far higher claims.

Demolishing the Aga's claim on a Nobel Prize was one thing, dealing with the awkward problem of the resolution another. The Council of State did not have any real power but had the trappings of parliament. Rules required that all resolutions be addressed to the Viceroy. And since this was a recommendation, members would ask what had been done with it? The India Office thought it might be possible to show that the resolution could not be forwarded to the Norwegians because the rule of the Nobel Committee did not allow part of a Parliament to make such a recommendation. But a copy of the rules, which the India Office had to procure from the Foreign Office, showed that recommendations could be made by members of parliament. But did this still hold when, not just individual members, but a whole assembly passed a resolution? The Foreign Office were not keen to get into the debate, and the India Office soon realized they could not hold up the recommendation on this point. There was one let-out. The Nobel Committee rules required that all recommendations be made by 1st February; the resolution itself was passed on the fifth and the Foreign Office suggested that they could, with perfect truth, turn down the recommendation on this point.

The other solution was to pass the recommendation onto the Norwegian Parliament, leaving it to decide whether the time limit should be extended, but making it clear to the Parliament that the British Government were 'only acting as a post office', which would be 'a sufficiently clear indication that they do not endorse this recommendation.' This carried the danger that the Aga Khan might actually win the prize. As one India Office official minuted:

> It might be supposed that a rejection of the recommendation would be a foregone conclusion. But I gather that candidates with any real claim to consideration are apt to be scarce and that the Norwegian Parliament might not be undisposed to honour an Indian notable.

One possible way out was for the Viceroy to forward the resolution privately with a disclaimer that he did so without making any comment on its merits. The Viceroy was quite happy to do that, but he could not see how it would be possible for him to forward a public resolution privately. However, Ramsay MacDonald who, the previous month had become Labour's first prime minister, would not hear of it. He would, in later years, much enjoy the Aga's mangoes, but now the idea of forwarding this recommendation through official channels gravely disturbed him. The Council of State was quite wrong in adopting this resolution and if it had to

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go to Norway, then it should be done direct from India and not through the British Government.

On 11th April 1924, the Secretary to the Government of India of the Foreign and Political Department wrote to the Secretary of the Nobel Prize Committee in Kristiania, Norway, forwarding the resolution and explaining that the Government of India wished to express no opinion.

But, for the Norwegians, this merely created a headache. On 6th May 1924, Mr Vogt, the Norwegian Minister in London, met Sir Eyre Crowe, the Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, and brought up the question of the Aga Khan's candidature for a Nobel Peace Prize. He had the copy of the resolution forwarded by the Government of India and a memorandum elaborating the Aga's case. The 'post office' role had clearly not worked. The Norwegians wanted to know what weight, if any, to place on the resolution and the memorandum. The Foreign Office thought the memorandum was the work of a 'Norwegian who was suspected of having been put up to writing it by the Aga Khan himself.' It was a eulogy of the Aga's ceaseless striving for peace during and after the war. In a confidential note, parts of which we have already seen, the India Office effectively demolished the memorandum.

What followed now throws an interesting light on how the India Office, or probably any government department, operated. The memorandum on the Aga that the Foreign Office had sent to the India Office had been accompanied by the usual confidential government letter from Nevile Bland of the Foreign Office to Sir Malcolm Seton at the India Office. The ordinary procedure would have been for Sir Malcolm, or someone else, to write a confidential letter to Nevile Bland conveying the points made in the minute on the Aga. But for the India Office these notes were 'privileged', so secret that they could not even be put in a confidential government letter. The solution was simple, a Mr S. K. Brown of the India Office lent the file on the Aga containing the notes to Nevile Bland. Sir Eyre Crowe took in the salient features of the file and, on the night of 16th May 1924, when he met Vogt for dinner he conveyed to him the feelings of the British Government on the Aga as a possible Nobel candidate. The file was returned and everything seemed fine.

But the Norwegians were not satisfied. Vogt still wanted something on the record about the Aga's memorandum. India Office were very reluctant to commit anything to paper; after some weeks' delay, and a couple of reminders from the Foreign Office, they finally produced an official reply. Most comically, Mr Brown now explained to Bland that the reason for the delay in replying had been due to 'the temporary absence of the papers without leave.' (Both of them knew perfectly well where the papers had gone without leave!) They were able to confirm only one statement of fact in the memorandum: yes, the Viceroy had requested the Aga to head the Indian Muslim delegation that met Lloyd George in February 1921, on the rest it passed the buck, suggesting that perhaps Sir Horace Rumbold could estimate the effect of the Aga's work at the Lausanne conference. In any case, argued the India Office letter, 'there does not appear to be very much

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in the memorandum in the way of statement of fact which the India Office is in a position to confirm or dispute.'

We do not know if Vogt was satisfied. But the Nobel Peace Committee evidently did not pursue the matter. In July 1924, at a meeting of the Council of State in Simla, a member asked what had happened to the various resolutions passed in the Delhi session earlier in the year? The Government produced a long list in which the 'post office' action on the Aga's resolution was quietly buried — and the matter was forgotten. It was the summer of 1924 before the matter was finally laid to rest. Then the bureaucrats debated as to who exactly could propose a candidate for the Nobel Peace Prize, and concluded that the Indian law member was wrong; members of the Legislative Assembly, individually, could propose candidates but not in their corporate capacity. It was, perhaps, an appropriate legal ending for such a curious chapter.

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BOOK THREE

INKY AND THE BLACK PRINCE

Aga Khan III, Aly Khan (1924 – 1939)

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Chapter 16

Inky

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There is a photograph of the third Aga Khan taken some time in 1924. It shows him wearing horn-rimmed glasses and a trilby; his moustache, still luxuriant, is streaked with white, he has on a three-piece suit which is clearly stretched to hold all of him; and on his left arm is a folded raincoat. The Aga Khan was then forty-seven and it captures 'Inky' very well. That was the nickname given to him by some of his more intimate casino and social friends and seemed to convey the portly voluptuary just right. He was so very large now that many who met him would think he needed a specially large seat, and that he looked like the Papa, the sugar-daddy of popular fiction. By then he weighed 243 pounds, a weight that was worth almost £640,000 in diamonds and jewellery. He ate enormously, his breakfast would often consist of six eggs, twenty cutlets, several large pieces of toast and several cups of tea and coffee. An Edwardian figure wandering around in the style and the manner of an English country gentleman, if rather brown. In the thirties, the Aga would actually feature in advertisements on the side of London buses, with the headline that read, 'rich and dark, like the Aga Khan', as an inducement to buy a certain kind of chocolate. In fact, he was not quite as brown as most Indians can be, and Michael Korda's nanny, who had always thought of him as black, was surprised to discover when she actually encountered his all too ample flesh, that he was about the same colour as Winston Churchill, though perhaps a little less pink in the face. Michael Korda, himself, would think that both of them looked remarkably like Charles Laughton.

In that summer of 1924 the Aga's weight had actually caused a rather serious problem. In recent years he had protracted bouts of illnesses generally connected with flatulence and over-eating, but on 23rd June 1924 he suffered a heart attack while attending a meeting in London of the Crown Colonies Committee. The Aga's work with this committee followed his natural interest in East Africa, one that had been highlighted in 1923 during his visit to India. Asians had been settling in East Africa for some years and the Aga had often proposed that German East Africa should be given over to Indian colonization. After the war, and Indian troops' efforts to secure East Africa from the Germans, Indians in that part of the world began to clamour for rights; at least some equality between them and the

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English settlers. The English settlers had the right to settle in the Kenyan highlands and they had parliamentary and human rights which were denied to the Indians. Pressures began to build up for this, there was a white backlash and, inevitably, violence. During his visit to India between January and March 1923, the Aga had actually planned to go to East Africa, but as the violence spread, he changed his mind. His type of politics did not work in the sort of atmosphere that prevailed then in East Africa.

Eventually, a very English solution began to emerge: a White Paper was published in 1923 and the Overseas India Committee, officially known as the Crown Colonies Committee began a series of meetings in London between April and July 1924.

It was while he was attending one of the meetings of this committee on 23rd June 1924, that the Aga suffered a heart attack and retired, first to Paris and then to the South of France. How serious it was is difficult to say, for the evidence for the heart attack comes from the confidential files on the committee maintained by the Government of India. Although *The Times* mentioned his health it did not specify his ailment and the Aga, in his *Memoirs* does not refer to the heart attack. But the heart attack did allow him to reflect on the quite continuous exposure to public affairs since 1906. In his *Memoirs* he would see 1924 as forming a divide:

> Of all that happened in those sad and turbulent years [meaning the years between 1924 and the outbreak of the Second World War] I was a spectator — occasionally in the columns of *The Times*, but thenceforth I ceased to be, as I have so long been, an active participant.

The Aga was not a man for regrets or for acknowledging failure, but this was the closest he came in his *Memoirs* to accepting that he was finished as an international politician.

The Aga was perhaps making too smooth a historical connection. More accurately, 1924 marked the end of the second phase of the Aga's public life. Between 1906 when he made his debut in Simla and 1913, he had been leader of the Muslim League. The war had propelled him into an international role. Now he was no longer Britain's Islamic champion. He still had the looks and the air of a man who had money, power and authority; Lord Boothby, who hardly knew him but saw him now and again, would feel that he exuded a certain royal air. But in strict political terms the Aga's politics had grown old.

In India, Gandhi had swept aside the pre-war Indian politicians who modelled themselves on Gokhale (there was some irony in this, since Gandhi considered Gokhale as his mentor), and the Muslim League was dormant. In any case, the Aga had little in common with the modern political Indian Muslim, and internationally the two countries to which the Aga had hitched his Muslim star were in decline. Turkey, shorn of her Empire, became a modern, second-class power, while Egypt, the other country the Aga had flirted with, was still struggling to emerge from its semi-colonial status. The young man from Bombay who had been dazzled

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at the age of twenty-two by the Victorian world in 1898, could not now appreciate that that world had long gone.

One of the effects of the carnage of the First World War, at least in Europe, was that politicians of the Victorian and Edwardian age continued to rule until well into the 1930s. The Aga was not of Europe. His standing was based on his position — or his supposed position — in Asia. There, the 1920s and 30s were the time of youth; Asia was fortunate that the flower of its youth did not fall in muddy trenches. Instead it produced war, revolution, ideas and ferment. All this passed the Aga by.

But it is a measure of the man and a reflection of the age that from 1924 to 1938 — almost to the outbreak of the Second World War — he was to figure both in Indian and in international affairs. For a brief period, as we shall see, he would make his beloved Ritz Hotel in London the headquarters of Indian politics; and on the international stage the Aga, the great Indian leader, still hovered, always ready with a plan or an idea to solve our problems. He hovered mostly in the wings but made sufficient noise to suggest that he was really star-cast.

His withdrawal from public life in 1924 did not mean more time for Theresa and Aly. They continued to live in the South of France, though in January 1923, he had felt free to take Theresa and Aly to India for the first time. As we have seen, this was the occasion when he married Theresa, and when Theresa returned to Cimiez she found that she had at last acquired the title she had always dreamt of, 'Khan, Theresa'. The visit to Bombay also introduced Theresa and Aly to the other Aga, the Aga they had heard so much about but never actually seen. The Aga, who was the living God to his followers, who in the safety of the Aga Hall in Bombay's congested Mazagoan would discard his Western three-piece suits and starched stiff collars and return to his heavy, embroidered robes and high Persian hats to receive homage and money from his followers. The Aga, so the story went, who claimed that he was not merely a descendant of the Prophet, but Malik i yaumal din — Master of the Heavens. The man who would give his credulous followers letters of introduction to the archangel Gabriel to ensure that they would be well looked after in the hereafter. Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister would later write:

> I do hope it [the story] is based on fact. There is little romance left in this drab and dreary world and to correspond with an archangel is a captivating idea. It seems to bring heaven nearer, and even our life down here below resumes a rosier hue.

But this was not without its problems, for despite his rapport with the archangel Gabriel the Aga discovered that there were certain earthly correspondents causing a lot of trouble. The most prominent of these were the Income Tax Authorities.

Some time in 1924/5, the Aga decided that he ought to do something about Aly's education. The rambling, cosy Italian household in the South of France was all very well, but it was no permanent solution. The boy

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would have to grow up, in the world which, as the Aga saw it, was still an English world. The men he admired were the tall, upright Raj men and he was evidently worried that in that warm Italian household Aly would grow up to be another Wop. The son the Aga met in his sporadic contacts appeared a delicate child, a 'delicacy' the Aga thought needed to be overcome. The Aga was probably also worried about Aly's slightly effeminate behaviour. Once, in the Aga's presence, he jumped on the lap of his tutor Edmund Grin and kissed him. Nor, perhaps did Theresa's assurance that she would get Aly a mistress at fourteen reassure the Aga. He decided to bring Aly to England and place him under the care of Charles Willoughby Waddington, former principal of a male college at Ajmir and an Oxford classical scholar.

Waddington had now retired to England and was living the archetypal old India-hand life. He had a country life as pretty as pretty can be, he wrote poetry, rode a little and devoured every scrap of news about India. To the Aga, he seemed ideal as a guardian who would prepare him for university. Aly was only fourteen years old, but for his father this was just the age, as he would later put it to the Viceroy in a memorial, for him to 'understand and acquire the fundamental characteristics of the English race, the fellow subjects under the King Emperor of so many of your Memorialist's followers, and under whose suzerainty Your Memorialist is proud to have found formal recognition.'

The Aga also recognized that whatever may have happened in the previous fourteen years of Aly's existence, if Aly was to succeed to his 'position of such wide and peculiar influence,' he and the Aga ought to be on more intimate terms. This meant the Aga setting up residence in England, and being subject to the Inland Revenue. It was this that had prompted the Memorial, written on 4th August 1925 and addressed to Lord Reading, then Viceroy in India. Interestingly, it was not on the notepaper of the Marlborough Club or on one of the hotels of the south of France that the Aga loved, but c/o Coutts & Company, London. The main part of the Memorial, drawn up as a legal-sounding document, was a familiar recital of the family's history, and the services the Khans had provided to the British Government. There was the usual Aga gloss; the honours conferred on him in 1916 were now recounted as if they were gifts of the King, rather than something the Aga had begged for.

> In most years he [the Aga] spends a short time on one or more visits to England, during which he has been beset by numerous enquiries from the English Income Tax Authorities doubtless with a view to making a claim upon Your Memorialist on the basis of his being resident in England. As, however, he has never been resident here no assessment has been made and repayment of income tax upon his investments in Great Britain have been duly made.

But now that he wished to set up residence in England:

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It is obviously necessary for Your Memorialist to consider the question of his possible liability to English Income Tax, which he understands will be raised not merely as to his British receipts or expenditure but as to the whole of the offerings made to him by his followers all over the world, a state of affairs which might well result in serious complications.

The Aga argued that his position was unique, so unique that 'the bond between him and them [his followers] cannot accurately be expressed in terms of Western jurisprudence.' The Aga had been advised that the honorary awards made to him in 1916 also exempted him from income tax. This was how the Ruling Chiefs were treated and, since he had the same titles and ranks, he saw no reason why he should not enjoy the same taxation privileges.

The Indian Ruling Princes had exemption from British tax because they did rule over a certain territory. In his begging letter of 1915 which led to the grant of honours, the Aga had expressively disclaimed any desire to seek 'territorial sovereignty' to accompany the distinctions. The rank and status were meant to be for ceremonial purposes and this was how they were seen, both by him and by the British government. Reading could not see how the Aga could be given income tax exemption on the same basis that the Ruling Chiefs enjoyed. As he put it in his private and personal letter to the Secretary of State, 'I am doubtful whether constitutionally His Majesty could confer these privileges on anyone who was not a territorial sovereign.'

In London, the Secretary of State's officials agreed with Reading. As a Mr Wakely put it:

> ... no refinement of argument seemed necessary to refute the Aga Khan's claim, which I venture will be very summarily rejected. On its merits it invokes no sympathy. If the Aga Khan finds it convenient to take advantage of the amenities offered by this country, there is no reason whatever why he should not bear a share in the burden of taxation. Regarding it as a claim as of right, it seems to me quite untenable.

The Aga, as another official noted, was 'not a sovereign, still less an independent sovereign, and I see no chance whatever of inducing the Revenue Authorities to hold that he is not liable to income tax if he takes up residence in this country.' On 3rd December 1925, J. P. Thompson, of the Foreign and Political Department of the Government of India, in a letter to the Aga, addressed as 'My Dear Friend', shut the door on his income tax exemption hopes for ever.

Aly continued to be educated by Waddington but the Aga decided that, as far as England was concerned, a few days in the Ritz hotel was about all he could afford — if he was not to fall prey to the tax man. In many ways the pattern of his life, flitting about the South of France, then England, and quick visits to India and East Africa, had already been set. But this failure to get official approval for his tax-dodge plan confirmed his life style. The Aga, almost to the end, would be a wanderer. In time he would acquire

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villas in the South of France, but then he had tax exemption from the French, and just before his death, a permanent residence in Switzerland. While his wanderings were always presented as part of his public duty, privately constant movement was necessary merely to keep just ahead of the chasing tax man. It was a bereavement that, ironically, was to shape his life rather more.

Theresa Magliano's married life with the Aga had always been curious. Now her death was to complete the picture of a woman in plenty who often hears of her husband, but rarely ever sees him. That one visit to India had made a deep impression on Theresa. She had returned to produce sculptures that showed the influence of ancient Hindu and Buddhist conception. The subtle Indian charm was now a prominent feature of her work which was displayed at the Royal Academy in London as well as at many exhibitions in Paris, Brussels and Italy. They were always under the *nom de guerre* 'Ilashah', never her maiden name, or the married name that was not quite hers. This did create a problem for many of her works could not always be traced to their source, and one prominent art critic would later think that she would have left an even greater name as a sculptress had she done most of her work under her own name. A delicate health did not help and in 1926 she fell gravely ill. After several diagnoses it was finally discovered that she was suffering from tuberculosis and was taken to hospital in Paris. In the first week of December 1926, the Aga was in London when he received a telegram informing him that an operation had be performed and he hurried back to Paris.

The operation seemed to have gone successfully and, one afternoon while the Aga had gone for his regular drive in the Bois, a sudden complication arose. Theresa was having a post prandial chat with her friend Gina Lamy when suddenly she was overwhelmed with the sensation of choking. A blood clot had formed, travelled to her heart, and within minutes she was dead. When the Aga returned from his drive, Theresa had been dead for some time.

A distraught Aly arrived from Huntingdon and, with the Aga, performed the funeral ceremonies at the Paris Mosque on 2nd December 1926. The body was embalmed and taken to the hillside cemetery in Monaco where seventeen years previously her eighteen months' old child Guiseppe Mahdi had been buried. On 8th December, 1926, the Aga divorced Shahzadi, his first wife. In death, as in life, Theresa Magliano Khan had been just a little behind.

The death of Theresa seemed to make the Aga that bit more concerned for Aly. A few weeks after the Aga and Aly had buried Theresa, soon after Christmas of that year, the Aga wrote from the Atlantic Hotel in Nice to Beaverbrook, wondering if he could do him a great favour:

> You are sure to be giving a New Year's Eve party on 31st at Cannes or Monte. Now will you be very kind and ask me and my son both to it? I am very anxious that the New Year may come in not too sad for him and I know you were very kind to him at Newmarket. He is only a boy of

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sixteen and a half, but on this occasion I should love it if I may come to your party with him, wherever it is to be.

The party was held at Cannes, a party full of young people whose company did much to tide Aly over his period of grief. Beaverbrook evidently liked Aly. He thought his influence improved Max Aitken and his other boys and, whether this was flattery or not, told the Aga that he admired Aly's 'fine intellect', and predicted a brilliant future for him. But this sudden intimacy between father and son, forced on them in many ways, was not to be a permanent feature of their lives; and they would keep going their own ways.

It is said of great men that the mark of their greatness is that they can mix with the high and the low, with commoners and kings. By that yardstick the Aga was a very great man. The kings and statesmen of the Western world were his friends, of course, but two of the most unusual friendships that he formed were with a golf professional and a hall porter.

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The Aga's meeting with his professional golfer had that suddenness and sense of excitement that made him so mysterious to most Westerners. One Sunday morning, J. H. Taylor was in his golf shop in Surrey when he saw a swarthy looking gentleman enter the place. There were a number of customers and the swarthy looking gentleman stood back and waited until Taylor had served them all. Then he went over to the counter and introduced himself. The Aga wanted golfing lessons, and from that moment became a regular customer. Whenever he was in London, he would drive down at 8.30 in a taxi from the Ritz Hotel and have half an hour's golfing lesson with Taylor.

The Aga never did become a very good golfer — but he was not as bad as Lloyd George. Like all other golf enthusiasts, he took it very seriously and valued a win above everything else. As Taylor recalled:

> We used to play for 25 francs, once or twice I used to allow him to beat me. I would give him sixteen shots in a round leaving out the two short holes. When he beat me he would shoot his arm out to grab my 25 francs.

In our day, the sudden unexplained generosity of the Arab sheikhs is common. Then, in the days just after the First World War, though many had heard of the riches of the East, few had actually seen them. The Aga, while never approaching the unpredictability of the modern-day sheikhs, provided Taylor and others with a glimpse of the much talked about wealth of the East.

One day, soon after the First World War, the Aga asked Taylor whether he would like to come to the Continent with him. Taylor, who by then would have been prepared to go to the end of the world for the Aga, readily agreed. He arrived in Paris and found the Aga had booked him into a couple of rooms at the Ritz. 'I was flabbergasted. He said, "Taylor, don't

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pay. My secretary will pay all the bills''.' Taylor had met rich people and would meet many more rich people but this sort of first-hand experience of generosity from a man of another culture, whose life was already legendary, proved intoxicating. Even more than Taylor, however, it was a Greek from Crete whose involvement with the Aga was to illustrate both the Aga's character and the effect he could have on the ordinary run of men and women in the West.

George Criticos Fafoutakis was in many ways the classic immigrant. He came to England as a young man, after various jobs he became hall porter at the Ritz, but he remained a Greek for the rest of his days. On the face of it, he was an odd choice to be the confidante of a Muslim religious leader and an international statesman. While researching for this book, I visited the BBC's sound archives. There the lady mentioned the various material on the Aga and then said in very surprised tones: 'Oh yes, I also have something recorded on the Aga Khan from George.' There was a pause, then 'the Head Porter of the Ritz.' Her surprise was understandable, for George's story of his involvement with the Aga does sound like an Arabian Nights story. One day, soon after the First World War, the Aga entered the Ritz and asked for Schmid, Head Hall Porter. Schmid was not there and George stepped forward.

The Aga was doubtful if George could do the job but he did — and from that day on he virtually became the Aga's agent in this country. He placed bets for him, stood in for him at a party he was to give at Doncaster during one race meeting, and collected messages and gifts from his followers who visited him in London. The Aga would tell them that if they wanted to contact him in England, they should contact 'George of the Ritz'. In time the Aga would give George a 'title' — the Honorable — causing some confusion on the Ritz switchboard, where not everybody understood the Aga when he asked for the Hon. George. Generally, the gifts brought for the Aga by his followers appeared deceptive, but almost invariably consisted of money. Once George was given the shabbiest looking brown paper parcel to look after. Bits of newspaper stuck out of it, and George was quite ashamed to even sling it below his hall porter's desk. The Aga insisted that it was valuable and when George surreptitiously undid the string he realized why: inside was £5,000 in £5 notes, another religious donation for the Aga.

George not only acted as his agent, but also as his researcher. In every race in which the Aga had a horse running, he would jot down the first three, the distance by which the winner won, the starting price, the owner's name and how the horse was bred. Similar details had to be kept of the sales. Every evening at ten o'clock, the Head Hall Porter of the Ritz would ring the Aga at the Villa Jane Andrée and tell him the details of the races.

George was also the man who arranged delivery of the Aga's famous mangoes. Once a year, he sent mangoes to the Queen, the Princess Royal, Anthony Eden, Lord Rosebery, Lord Monckton, the Marquis of Salisbury, Lord Beaverbrook, Ramsay MacDonald and many others. He was also privy to the Aga's gastronomic expeditions

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Once, racing at Deauville, the Aga suggested to George that they fly to Lake Geneva for a meal. An aircraft from Croydon was immediately fixed up, and they went to a little restaurant and had lunch worth about £250, Aga doing all the eating, George doing most of the fascinated watching. It was nothing for the Aga to drive half way across Switzerland to eat trout from the famous blue lake near Interlaken. Food always fascinated him. While driving to a racecourse they might see somebody selling food from a stall. The Aga would stop the car and have some, often entering the racecourse with a bag full of fish and chips in his hand.

It was part of the fascination of the Aga story that he could move easily from George and his fish and chips to Beaverbrook and Lady Diana Cooper. Beaverbrook's friendship meant that the Aga always featured in his newspapers, and Malcolm Muggeridge and Bruce Lockhart who wrote for the *Evening Standard*'s Diary pages were instructed to treat the Aga with full respect and call him 'His Highness', a title of respect not easily accorded by the 'Beaver'. Every now and again, the Aga would have some news about the 'Muslim world' and Beaverbrook would find a place for it in the *Daily Express*.

From about 1921 onwards, Beaverbrook was also the man on whose financial advice the Aga came to depend, almost pathetically. The fact is that for all his wealth and grandeur, the Aga was a cautious, careful investor. He had been tutored well by his mother, Lady Aly Shah, and he watched his money like a hawk. He could be generous to his friends, but when it came to investing large amounts of money he took careful advice and made all the right soundings. The Aga's principle was long-term security and steady return — he was not a flashy investor. As he wrote to Beaverbrook, 'I must go for *safety first*, not only for myself but for those who are children now.' His favourite investment mediums were very often insurance companies — and, generally because of Beaverbrook, Canadian ones like Sun Life and Canada Life. Caution and building for the future were essential marks of the Aga as a financier. It was this that enabled him to survive — perhaps even profit — from the 1929 crash.

By 1929, the Ritz Hotel at Place Vendôme had become the Aga's headquarters, at least the place which he considered to be his safest address. It was a time of world economic crisis, stock markets yo-yoing up and down (the Wall Street crash was but a few months away) and, just before the crash, the Aga wanted Beaverbrook to examine his securities and tell him whether they were safe investments. Ought he to sell them at present prices?

How much was the Aga worth then? This is a difficult question to answer, though we may attempt one on the basis of the list of securities that he provided Beaverbrook to examine in May 1929. According to this, as at 2nd May 1929, Lloyds and National Provincial Foreign Bank at Haymarket held £205,599 worth of securities. A further £189,096 was held in Canada and 39,823,924 francs held in Paris, making a total holding in sterling of £715,855. The Westminster Bank at St James's Square held securities of £857,912 and Coutts & Company held a further £715,177.5s.1d. This made a total investment for the Aga of £2,288,944. The securities had a

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considerable spread, though the Aga seemed to prefer Government loans, like the Greek Government's seven per cent Refugee Loan of 1924 — interesting, considering his championship of Turkey — and the large companies like the New York Central Rail Road Company, or the American Tobacco Company. There were some holdings in relatively lesser known companies like Kreuger & Toll and Swedish Match. Kreuger was said to be buying an interest in Automatic Telephone Company, and both these were held heavily in America. So, as Beaverbrook advised in July 1929, should there be an American crash, an immense amount of stock would come to England.

It is not clear exactly how the Aga was affected by the great American stock market crash, though since his stocks were fairly well-chosen and spread, he probably was not affected a great deal. He was at Newmarket just before the crash and was convinced that the market would still keep going up. In fact, at Newmarket, he met somebody high up in the Chrysler Car Company who was very 'bullish' on cars, particularly about sales to Europe and South America, and assured the Aga that there was a lot more money to be made out of car stocks. According to a story that would later gain currency, the Aga made a number of very shrewd moves in the American stock market after the crash and piled up an even bigger fortune. This may be so, but there is no evidence of that in the Beaverbrook papers. He evidently came out well from the crash and by October 1930 he was writing to Beaverbrook that he had 'a little money to invest' and he was hesitating between three Canadian firms: Bank of Montreal, Royal Bank of Canada and Canadian Pacific Railways. Once again like the sound, good investor that he was, he was looking for long-term capital appreciation. By a little money, the Aga meant £60,000. Beaverbrook asked him to wait until the American presidential elections of 1930.

Beaverbrook's friendship meant that the Aga combined business, politics and a delightful social life popping in and out of Lockhart's Diary and the memories of Lady Diana Cooper. The Aga was a frequent guest at Cherkley, Beaverbrook's country home, where his solid, commonsensical anecdotes about India, Gandhi and business provided a nice contrast to the general, light gossipy atmosphere.

Lady Diana Cooper is in her nineties, but her memory of the Aga Khan is precise and interesting. The Aga was actually a friend of her mother, already part of London society when Diana Cooper made her by now celebrated appearance just before the First World War. By the 1920s, the friendship had been transferred from the mother to the daughter, and the Aga gave Diana Cooper £1,000 in 1920 as a wedding present, a cheque that quite dazzled her. 'I thought I couldn't believe my eyes, I wished I had put another nought behind the figures. I suppose he was initially fond of me as a rather ridiculous girl, brave, but ridiculous. But he had a great understanding.'

Diana Cooper had seen the Aga Khan since she was a child, but what struck her now was his intelligence and his cultivation. 'I fancy myself as not being educated but being cultivated. He was always surprising me — I

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mean he knew the illustrator of *Alice in Wonderland* which was more than I did.' The Aga, with Lord Beaverbrook and many others, was to be a godfather to her son, John Julius, and it was such acts of kindness that Lady Diana remembers, a particular one being in 1938 when tragedy suddenly visited her.

This was just before Lady Diana's husband Duff Cooper had resigned over Munich. She, along with an innocent group of young people, took a little steamer from Westminster pier and went on the river:

> The idea was that we were all going to bathe but it was a beastly evening. We had got together a little quartet of musicians, high class, to come on board to play chamber music. We had gone, oh I don't know, about ten miles up the river singing songs and I suddenly said, or I think I said, or somebody else said, 'we've none of us bathed which is why we came out, just because it's raining, but when it's raining it doesn't matter whether you are in the water or out of the water.' So a young man who we were all very fond of took his coat off, gave me his watch, jumped in and was drowned. On top of that, one of the young musicians jumped in, too, and was drowned. Then everybody began jumping in and all the women were hanging onto their men so that they wouldn't jump in....We never thought it was dangerous, we thought we'd just go out and come back again. And two people died. This was where the Aga was so generous, though he was not connected in any way. He was very sweet and grand about it and he sent each family £1,000 to overcome their trouble. He was one of the most generous of men.

Allied to this generosity was his uniqueness, the thing that had fascinated Gertrude Bell and John Bailey. Though London had a few more Indians and a few more Asians now, the Aga was still the only one in a grand society. There were a few Maharajas about, but Diana Cooper cannot remember any of them. They may have been just as grand and generous as the Aga, but they did not have his combination, an air of mystery allied to being very much a man of the world.

Freya Stark was thrilled to read about the connection between the Aga Khan and the Assassins — having been provided privileged access to confidential India Office documents by Sir Henry Lawrence — and many others in London society found his attitude to divinity charming and witty. When Leo Amery had once asked him whether he believed in God, the Aga had replied, 'I have to, it's my business.' And if acquaintances twitted him about a god drinking champagne and going to the races, he would counter with, 'Why cannot a God do that if human beings whom he created can?'

Diana Cooper was at the centre of what Beaverbrook called 'the old gang'; Beaverbrook himself, the Aga Khan, Mrs Edwin Montagu (née Venetia Stanley), with Diana Cooper providing the glamour and much of the fun. They often met when there were in town together, either in London or Paris, with the Aga hosting many of these parties at select restaurants and Lady Diana Cooper choosing the restaurants, and often the right men

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and women to come to the Aga's parties. But if the Aga could switch from George Criticos to an evening with Diana Cooper searching out a good French restaurant to dine in, he could just as easily switch to a fairly heavyweight lunch or dinner with Lord Astor, David Astor's father.

Their friendship started on the racecourse, both of them being prominent owners, though Lord Astor was not quite as prominent or as successful as the Aga. From there it progressed to a different sort of friendship, where Lord Astor felt that the Aga's presence at his political do's were important and useful. As David Astor recalled, 'Father took him seriously, didn't just treat him as a bloodstock owner.' David Astor can recall how in the 1930s the Aga came to a luncheon in their house at 4 St James's Square, just opposite the London Library. The guest of honour was Lloyd George, and Isaac Foot, along with the American Ambassador of the day, was also present. Astor thinks that the fact that the Aga was invited was proof of his standing. He cannot remember what the Aga said, or that he made a great political contribution at the gathering but he recalls that 'the Aga was noticeable for his attentiveness. He was very observant and thoughtful, a Buddha-like figure, making his occasional contribution.'

Even if the Aga said nothing earth-shattering or even significant, he said it with great dignity. One minute he could be with the monocled Jimmy de Rothschild or with the racehorse owner Solly Joel, usually to be seen resplendent in a natty yachting suit taking his turns in the baccarat at Deauville; now at Lord Astor's table, surrounded by politicians and statesmen, he could play the part of the wise leader from the East whose absence made any international gathering incomplete. It was a trick of personality but the trick worked well.

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Chapter 17

Racing

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As the Aga's political interests declined, his racing interests increased. This may seem natural, but in fact the Aga saw the two inextricably linked together. Racing was meant to promote his waning political influence. Here he may have been drawing on an example of a minor Indian prince who became a sensation in England, because of his prowess in the English national game — cricket. The prince was Jam Saheb of Nawanagar. To the English cricket public he was — is — known as Ranji, along with W. G. Grace and Victor Trumper, one of the immortals of the game. Whenever cricketers talk, Ranji's name seems to conjure up a world of magic and mystery. Yet Ranji was a prince who had lost out in one of those complicated Indian succession battles, and came to England to display his cricketing genius. Cricket provided him with such a reputation in this country, that his political path in India was smoothed and he used his cricket to further his princely ambitions.

The Aga may have drawn his examples from this. Or it may have been from examples of politicians like Lord Rosebery who combined racing with the prime ministership, winning when Premier, the first of his two Derby races in the reign of Queen Victoria.

It helped that the Aga came from a racing family, and even before he came to England he had horses running in his name throughout western India. He planned, it seems, to start a racing partnership in England with his cousin Aga Shamsuddin, but this was thwarted by Shamsuddin's death in 1910. Then, the Aga's involvement in politics and the war meant his racing ambitions had to wait until the 1920s. His interest in English racing went as far back as 1904. He had been on a visit to Colonel Hall-Walker's Tully Farm in County Kildare. Hall-Walker, later to become Lord Wavertree, showed the Aga round the stud and was impressed by his interest in breeding, always the Aga's favourite racing subject. Walker suggested to the Aga that he might find it profitable to come racing to Ireland and England and to start a stud on the lush pastures of Kildare, which had proved so profitable to Hall-Walker himself. Though the Aga was impressed with Hall-Walker, 1904 was not a year he could contemplate racing. He was still fascinated by motor cars and beginning to think of a political future.

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The real impetus had to wait until 1921 when Mrs Asquith, the daughter-in-law of the former prime minister and sister of George Lambton's wife, suggested over dinner one night that the Aga ought to get George Lambton to train horses for him. George Lambton could not do so, since he was a trainer to Lord Derby, but he agreed to buy yearlings for the Aga and recommended R. C. Dawson, the Whatcombe trainer. Nor could the Aga get the green and red colours that he wanted and had to do with 'green and chocolate hoops, chocolate caps'. But he soon began to appreciate Lambton's judgement of horses. In the 1921 sales he bought a clutch of fillies, included Cos and Teresina. Cos won the Queen Mary stakes and five other races as a two-year-old; Teresina took a bit longer, but won the Goodwood Cup and produced some very successful foals. One of Cos's foals was Rustom Pasha which won the Eclipse Stakes in 1930; Teresina bred Theresina whose son Turkhan won the Irish Derby and a war-time St Leger in 1940. The Aga might have won the Derby in 1923, or at least this is what George Criticos believed. On the Aga's instructions, he had sent a wire to George Lambton requesting him to buy a yearling colt by the famous sire, Tracery. Neither Dawson nor Lambton shared the Aga's enthusiasm; a pity, because the horse, called Papyrus, won the 1923 Derby.

It was in the second year's batch of yearlings that George Lambton made his mark with the Aga. He bought for him Mumtaz Mahal, Diophon, which won the 1924 2,000 Guineas, and Salmon Trout which won the 1924 St Leger. At the end of the 1924 season, after only three years of racing, the Aga was the leading owner and his horses had won nineteen races, which meant £44,367.

The skill of George Lambton's selection was not so much that the horses won immediate victory, though some of them did, but that they bred great winners. Mumtaz Mahal was a riding sensation of 1923, though she won nothing very significant, but her descendants included the great Mahmoud, winner of the 1936 Derby, while Friar's Daughter, a yearling bought in 1922, bred Dastur and Bahram.

By the mid-1920s the Aga had a considerable horse racing empire. His five studs in Ireland were the Sheshoon, Ballymany, the Gilltown, the Ongar and the Sallymount, while his French racing establishment included the stud owned by the late Edouard Kann which produced a French Oaks winner, Uganda, who was the dam of several successful horses. In 1930 the Aga often had more than one horse in the big race; that year the Aga ran Rustom Pasha and Blenheim in the Derby and saw the less fancied Blenheim win. Next year saw a break in the Aga's racing relationship. Michael Beary, the Aga's old friend, became his jockey as Charlie Smirke had fallen out with R. C. Dawson. But in 1931, R. C. Dawson began to suspect that Beary was trying to lure the Aga's horses away to be trained by his brother J. Beary. Dawson was a man who was inclined to be high-handed and at Newbury races there was almost a public row between the Aga and Dawson. The result was that the Aga sent his horses to Frank Butters at Fitzroy House in Newmarket. The Aga would always say Butters was the best trainer he had ever known and Newmarket was the only place

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to train horses. The change did wonders for the Aga. He was already established as a great racehorse owner; now he began to scale the heights, and become one of the legends of the British turf. Over the next twenty years he was to dominate British racing in a way that few racehorse owners had in the past, or have done since. He won the Oaks and the St Leger in 1932, the Derby in 1930 and 1936 and Bahram did the clean sweep in 1935, winning the 2,000 Guineas, the Derby and the St Leger. (See illustration, page 233.)

In time he was to become quite an authority. The Aga's philosophy for training good horses was what he called the William Duke dope test. William Duke had been one of his first trainers in France, and the William Duke dope method consisted of, as the Aga would put it to George Criticos, 'plenty of good food, plenty of fresh air and plenty of hard work. In boxers, ballet dancers and racehorses, it is the legs that count.'

The Aga never backed his own horses, though he did like to bet. The usual bet that George put on his horses was £500; only when he felt it was a very good tip did he make it up to £1,000. His betting at the casinos at Deauville or Cannes was along similar lines. He would never actually sit down at the baccarat tables but stand and watch, then intervene successfully and withdraw.

At the gambling table, as much as at the paddock, the Aga was unsentimental and hard-headed. He liked the sensation of leading in a winner, with the paddock echoing to shouts of 'good old Aga', but to him — as Aly would confess later — horses were a way of making money. If this meant he had to sell Derby winners to American studs, he did not mind though this would lead to strained relations with the British turf authorities.

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Chapter 18

Return to Indian Politics

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On 4th November 1927 the Aga, at a luncheon in the Ritz Hotel, gave his views on off-course betting. The week had seen the stewards of the Jockey Club place before the Chancellor of the Exchequer proposals for realizing the installation of the totalisator on the race course. The Aga welcomed it and complimented *The Times* racing correspondent for having originally thought of the idea. In the years since Theresa's death in 1924 the Aga had studiously kept away from politics, and his public role had been more concerned with racing. But four days after the Aga made this speech the Indian political world was rocked to its foundations, and the Aga was soon switching tracks.

The Montagu-Chelmsford reforms of 1919 required that there be a statutory review after ten years, and on 8th November 1927 Lord Birkenhead, Secretary of State for India, announced that a Statutory Commission of seven British MPs would visit India and review the working of the Act. Birkenhead did not believe that Indians would ever be fit enough to govern themselves and he could never accept that the parliamentary example of the white dominions of Australia or Canada could ever be applied in India.

The effect in India was devastating. Since the withdrawal of Gandhi's first civil disobedience movement, and his arrest in 1922, political India had reverted more to the pre-Gandhian style. Some of Gandhi's own men had begun cooperating with the British and seeking election to the assemblies provided under the reforms. Hindu-Muslim unity, under the Khilafat slogan of saving Turkey's Caliph, had all but disappeared and the Muslim League had begun to distance itself from the Congress.

Birkenhead's announcement changed all that. Indians who had wanted to believe that the British really meant to prepare the country for self-government were staggered to learn that all the members of the Commission were to be white. The years since the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms had seen more Indians admitted to the higher reaches of the administration. Indians had served on committees and on commissions. Now when it came to the most important commission, Indians were once again to be treated as children who had to accept what nanny gave them. Almost overnight, the disunited Congress agreed that the Commission had to be boycotted. But what would the Muslims do?

The Aga had arrived in London from Paris just a month before the

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announcement but, on hearing the news, he was quickly in touch with Muslim leaders in India. Since 1913, and the Aga's defeat at the hands of Muhammed Ali, there had been many Muslim leaders, though none of them could even remotely match the Aga's international standing. For Indian Muslims it seemed that, faced by a vibrant Congress and complex negotiations with the British, they required a leader, or at least a front man, who could move easily in London society — as the Aga undoubtedly could. The Aga quickly decided to go to India. On 9th December 1927 he arrived in Bombay. Already, rival Muslim leaders were beginning to state their positions.

Jinnah was in favour of boycotting the Commission and fashioning out another *rapprochement* with the Congress. The Aga's old protegé, Mohammed Shafi, wanted to cooperate with the Commission. In December there were two rival meetings of the Muslims. Jinnah's League resolved to boycott the Commission and almost simultaneously Shafi's men met at Lahore and voted for cooperation. The Aga's public announcements were guarded. After he had arrived in Bombay, he suggested that the boycott could harm the liberal elements of the community. On 30th December, as the Muslim split became clear, Aga suggested that the elected Muslim representatives of the legislature should form a new permanent body which would guide Muslim political activity. It would have real political power and they could enter into binding agreements with both the Raj and the Hindus. But he still made no definite pronouncements on the Commission; he was clearly against the boycott for as he put it 'the British Government will be in India for as long as we can see, and cannot be spirited away merely by being ignored.'

The Aga had set out his marker, as it were. He spent almost three months in India, meeting various Muslim leaders and returned to Europe in the spring of 1928. For much of that summer his health was rather poor and only in late summer, early autumn, as Indians began reporting to the Commission Birkenhead had sent to India, did the Aga's political role begin to take shape.

The Indian Nationalists, nettled by Birkenhead's comments, had decided to formulate their own constitution for a free India. After a great deal of debate and discussion, this was finally approved in August 1928 and became known as the Nehru report, after Motilal Nehru, father of Jawaharlal Nehru — and then the more heavyweight Nehru in Indian politics. Far from helping matters it produced disunity in Congress ranks, particularly from the younger nationalists like Motilal's own son Jawaharlal and the fiery left-winger Subhas Bose. It also alienated Jinnah and his Muslims. Though Nehru was secular and wanted to speak for all Indians, his report essentially meant a constitution that would help nationalist Hindus inherit a united centralized Raj, embracing not only the British Indian provinces, but also the one third of India that was ruled autonomously by the Indian princes.

Since Montagu's departure in 1922, the Aga had made few public comments about the Indian political scene. He had spoken, and written, of social and economic affairs, like the cotton industry in Bombay, tariff barriers between

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the two countries, etc. Now, the Nehru report was the launching pad for his major comment on Indian politics. On 12th and 13th October he wrote two long articles in *The Times*, concentrating on 'fatal defects' of the Nehru report. The Aga thought Nehru's proposals for ensuring that the princes lost their political freedom impractical, that the defence ideas were too vaguely handled and, that 'a vital defect' was the proposals for a strong centre. To the Aga, India could only progress towards some form of self-government if there was a federation of Indian states, each unit of the federation strong, the centre rather weak and watery. And the Aga suggested a grouping of free states on the German Bavarian model.

In December 1928 the Aga arrived in India. He had not quite recovered from his ill health of the summer and his doctors had advised against such a visit, but there was important work to be done. On 31st December 1928 he presided over the All-India Muslim Conference that opened in Delhi. The Conference was the work of Fazl-i-Husain, a Muslim of the old school who liked the Aga. All the leaders of the Muslims were present, barring Jinnah. And they vied with each other to propose and support the Aga's election as chairman. Nearly every speaker repudiated the Nehru report. The Aga made one of his set-piece moderate speeches. There was the initial and loyal reference to the King Emperor, which the gathering cheered, and the declaration that Muslims were not just a community in India but a nation with worldwide cultural entity and strength in numbers that exceeded the pre-war German empire. Clearly, Bavaria was still playing on the Aga's mind.

However, India only aggravated the weakness and ill health that had dogged him throughout 1928. Doctors diagnosed he was suffering from glandular fever, and he decided to recover in Egypt. By 5th January 1929, the Aga was on the high seas. Just before he left he urged his followers to abstain from the communal violence that seemed then to be sweeping India. It is a reflection of the politics of the age, or perhaps the Aga's own highly individualistic style that for the next nine months the Aga made no overt political moves, without damaging his role as Muslim spokesman.

By mid January 1929, the Aga was in the Luxor Winter Palace in Egypt feeling he had done enough in Delhi to give 'my people ... a good start on a long journey'. He needed a distraction and, as he wrote to Beaverbrook on 24th January 1929, he was studying Egyptology.

At Easter 1929 the Aga arranged for Aly to go to Rome and spend some time there. He quite wanted Max Aitken, Beaverbrook's son, to go along as his guest, but Aitken had to stay at Cambridge to work under his tutor. The Aga was back in Europe during the spring of 1929, apparently fully recovered. But he did not re-enter the heavyweight political arena until November of that year. The reason for that was not political, or his health, but something deeply personal — a young French girl who worked in a dressmaking shop in Paris.

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Chapter 19

New Wife, New Problems

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For years, the Aga had been going to Aix-les-Bains, which he considered his 'holiday par excellence' — no secretaries, no work. The Aga had been such a regular visitor to Aix-les-Bains that the Mayor, Henri Clerc, had become one of his most intimate friends and would regard the Aga as an adopted son of Aix-les-Bains and Chambéry. But the Aga's interest in Aix-les-Bains was not merely to take the waters or have a rest — it also had a romantic edge. At the golf links there he met Mlle Andrée Carron, daughter of a Chambéry restaurant keeper. For some years, Andrée Carron had been in business with her sister Marcelle Carron, running a dressmaking shop in Paris; the two sisters providing an interesting physical contrast — Andrée was a brunette, Marcelle a rather striking blonde.

The Aga had known Andrée and her family for nearly fourteen years but it was only in the autumn of 1929 that he could think of marrying her. His first wife was now definitely divorced, his second wife dead. Although he enjoyed his freedom and his ladies, he could do with a marriage. But there was a problem. Andrée was a Catholic, and for all the Aga's persuasion and wealth, she refused to renounce her Catholic faith and become a Muslim. By this time, reports of the romance had leaked and journalists were busy scouring Chambéry and Aix-les-Bains in search of the Aga's Mlle Carron. One rumour had it that she was a Carron from Chambéry, and the reporters descended on Chambéry, found a girl called Mlle Carron serving candy in a sweet shop and readily believed this was the Aga's girl. Others were more accurate and Mlle Carron and her family were located. The *Paris Midi* reported Henri Clerc as confirming that, before the end of the year, he himself would officiate at the wedding of his friend the Aga and the daughter of a prominent Chambéry citizen.

But the problems of a Muslim-Catholic union could not be wished away and, on 29th October 1929, the *Sunderland Echo* carried a report from its Special Correspondent in London under the heading 'The Aga Khan's Position — a problem of his forthcoming wedding':

> His reported engagement to a French Roman Catholic approaches something like a crisis in his life story. Complications will arise out of the fact that the lady's parents insist upon a marriage in strict accordance

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with the Roman Church, which entails his giving a written undertaking that he will in no way bring any pressure to bear upon his wife to alter her faith after the wedding and that the children in any case will always remain Roman Catholic.... If the Aga gives such an undertaking and the points of the case are made known to his followers throughout Asia and Africa, it will create a bad impression, which may develop into a revolt and the withholding of the tribute money they pay to 'receive his blessings.' The enormous political influence that he has been exercising for good within the British Empire will also be materially affected. It is clear that the Aga Khan cannot lightly afford the loss of his annual income that comes to him from his followers, and which is estimated at many thousands a year. Nor will he willingly forego the prestige he enjoys in the eyes of the Moslems. A civil wedding has been suggested as a way out of the tangle. We shall see.

The *Sunderland Echo* was not the normally accepted medium of reflecting British or India Office opinion, but in this case it mirrored the concern felt by the Raj and by the British authorities that the Aga's marriage could well upset the delicate political apple cart. A Muslim leader marrying a non-Muslim but not converting her to the faith could strain the loyalty of many — including his devoted Khoja followers.

It is not clear if the Government, officially or unofficially, had words with the Aga about his marriage — but the wedding went ahead. It was a civil ceremony and took place on Saturday, 9th December 1929, in the principal chamber of Aix-les-Bains town hall.

The ceremony was in French, the Aga quickly saying 'Oui' followed by Andrée. The mayor, Henri Clerc, wanted the formalities completed speedily for he had prepared a long eulogy about the Aga's marriage to this French woman. He recalled the other great lovers of Aix-les-Bains — Lamartine and Elvire — and declared 'a union between a mighty potentate and an ordinary French woman stood out most beautifully and strikingly among so many marriages founded on considerations of social influence and on questions of finance. It would need a poet to do full justice to this fairy story in a modern setting.' Despite the civil wedding, there was a Muslim ceremony, although the gravity of the priest's prayers was somewhat ruined by photographers' flash bulbs popping during the recital of the Arabic verses.

Henri Clerc invested the Aga with the title of Citoyen Aixois. The Aga and his wife signed the first page of the Aix-les-Bains book of gold, and then the Aga took his wife down the ancient stone stairway of the Hotel de Ville and into the square where a large crowd waited to receive them. Aix-les-Bains had never seen anything like this. This was the magic and the romance of the Arabian Nights come alive in a provincial French town and the citizens were touched and overwhelmed. The Aga was touched too and signed a cheque for 250,000 francs to be used for public works, including the enlarging of the town's crêche. The publicity that had surrounded his marriage had not been to his liking. His private life he wanted to keep as his

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own and after the marriage he took care to see that he dropped out of the public eye. But if it was easy to fool the press, the marriage posed one delicate problem for the Aga. How would the British treat his French wife? Would the King receive her?

On 18th September 1929, Cavendish-Bentinck of the British Embassy in Paris wrote to Nevile Bland at the Foreign Office:

> I apologise for continually troubling you with regard to Indian Princes, but I think it is desirable that we should receive a ruling in regard to the Aga Khan's new wife. I understand that this lady is a native of the Department of La Haute Savoie, whose parents have been in humble circumstances. I enclose a cutting from a French newspaper which may amuse you. The wedding of the Aga Khan attracted so much publicity that his name is now used as an aid to advertisements.... If the Aga Khan and his new wife leave cards at this Embassy, I presume that Lady Tyrrell's cards should in return be left on her? Should she be invited to the annual garden parties in Paris, to after-dinner receptions, or to meals here? Is her title, as stated in the press, Her Highness Begum Aga Khan?

For the Foreign Office this was another 'horror' story. The treatment of European wives of Indian notables had long been a sore point with the British Embassies around the world. The British, of course, had a horror of mixed marriages: the idea of an Indian, however distinguished, marrying a European woman, however lowly placed, genuinely shocked most British officials, for racial as well as social reasons. The married lives of Indian princes were rather complicated, nobody ever knew how many wives they had (or so it was believed), and on the rare occasions when they married European women, they tended to marry from the lower classes. Some of them had also made fools of themselves chasing white women. The British had never encouraged Indian princes to marry English women, though, in the midst of the Second World War, Leo Amery, Secretary of State for India, would say with regret to Lord Linlithgow, Viceroy in India, that 'possibly it has been a real mistake of ours in the past not to encourage Indian princes to marry English wives for a succession of generations and so breed a more virile type of native ruler.' Amery, of course, was convinced that India could never run itself without a strong infusion of Nordic blood, 'whether by settlement, or inter-marriage or otherwise.'

European wives of Indian princes were treated quite badly by British Embassy officials, like for instance, the American wife of the ex-Maharaja of Indore. In the case of Andrée Carron, there was at least one thing in her favour. The Aga Khan was not an Indian Ruling Prince, so there was no question of his marrying a foreign woman and making an alliance that would be anti-British. The question was largely a social one. The officials were not sure what the Aga's marital status was. If his first wife was still living and if he had married again then, according the precedent set in the case of the Spanish wife of the Maharaja of Kapurthala, the European consort of a polygamously married Indian ruler, could not be received by high officials.

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Colonel Patterson of the India Office acknowledged that Andrée Carron's humble origins were a problem — but not an unsurmountable one:

> It appears to one that this lady is now Her Highness The Begum (or Sultana) Aga Khan. It is true that she and her parents were in humble circumstances but as there are no aspersions on her or their characters, I do not see how she can be precluded from receiving the usual official courtesy.

On 27th December 1929, Mr E. P. Donaldson of the India Office replied to Neville Bland:

> We should advise that should the lady — who may be described as Her Highness The Begum Aga Khan — leave cards at the British Embassy, Lady Tyrrell's cards should be in return left on her, and unless the Embassy has some information about the Begum not on record here which would render it undesirable to include her in invitations issued, we should be inclined to answer Bentinck's other question [about invitations to garden parties etc.] in the affirmative.

It was one thing satisfying the British Embassy in Paris, but the King was another matter. On the afternoon of 27th January 1930, Sir George Creighton asked Colonel Patterson to come and see him in the Lord Chamberlain's office. George Creighton was acting as the King's messenger. The King, said Creighton (as Patterson later recorded):

> is anxious to know as early as possible the status and position of the Aga Khan's wife, her court designation and whether she should be received at court by their Majesties.... The King would like the Viceroy's opinion obtained by telegram. He [Creighton] added that the Duke of Connaught was anxious as to how to receive the lady in the South of France, hence the advisability of having an early reply.

The rule, laid down in 1916, was that European wives could be received provided 'the lady is the monogamous wife and of unimpeachable character.' Even then, she should only be received in private and not granted any official recognition. European wives of Indian princes had been received in such circumstances by their Majesties in 1920, but was Andrée Carron's character unimpeachable? The Viceroy, of course, knew nothing about Andrée Carron's character — never having met her — but could confirm that the marriage was monogamous. He also thought that 'it would be politically desirable that she should be received at court if the Aga Khan made any request for her reception.' His only suggestion was that, since the Aga Khan's first Muslim wife called herself Her Highness The Lady Aga Khan, this should be the title and not Her Highness Begum Aga Khan.

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Officials in London could discover nothing against Andrée Carron. As it happened, the very afternoon that the official of the India Office was discussing this with the Foreign Office, Bentinck of the British Embassy in Paris — who had raised the original query — arrived in London and he assured both officials that they had nothing against Andrée Carron's character.

But George V was dreading the prospect of having to receive her. He did not like the Viceroy's idea of calling her Her Highness The Lady Aga Khan, and the thought of having to endure her during Ascot was just unbearable. All he hoped for, as Sir Clive Wigram told Colonel Patterson, was that Andrée Carron would not be too much of a 'pushy' lady. The English court was adaptable but the vision of a 'pushy' provincial French lady of 'humble circumstances' trying to make her way into an aristocratic British society through a marriage with an Indian potentate was a bit too much. Fortunately, for George V, he did not have to face the dilemma. The Aga Khan withdrew.

On 15th April 1930, Colonel Patterson received an envelope marked 'private'. In it was a long letter from the Aga, written from his permanent address c/o Coutts & Co., 440 Strand, and very frankly discussed his marital status. The Aga, much to the relief of everyone, told Patterson that he was not seeking an audience for himself and his wife with their Majesties. *'We both believe with conviction that only those wives* of princes as are themselves of princely birth should be honoured by an audience of their Majesties and special privileges and honours.' All he wanted was his wife to be presented at an ordinary presentation where the wife of the Secretary of State for India, in this case Wedgwood Benn's wife, would present Andrée Carron along with wives of other Indian notables and enable them to pay their respects to George V and Queen Mary. (See illustration, page 234.) For the Aga this was necessary, if only to still the rumours both in England and, more particularly, in India:

> As I have said, she [Andrée] is a sensible woman without the social climbing ambitions that are such additional handicaps of life. Apart from her and my yearnings, I need her to pay humble homage to her new Sovereign and Consort for she is now a British subject. I will go to India a good deal during the two or three years that will follow the issue of Simon's report.... Naturally I will take my wife and tho' in practice she will not go here and there with me, and will remain mostly in Poona, yet if she is not asked, or been presented in the ordinary fashion to which I have referred in this long letter, further legends will arise and even some foolish and idle tongues may put it down as a possible stigma on her (a most unjust one) other than on her temperamental modesty and home-loving simplicity.

Andrée Carron's title, however, continued to rankle. Even Colonel Patterson noted, 'it is difficult to understand why a French woman married to a Muhammedan politician should assume a title usually reserved for

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daughters of English Dukes, Marquis and Earls.' But in the end Andrée Carron's simplicity and lack of pushiness were accepted.

On 2nd June 1930, the Foreign Office reported 'that the Begum Aga Khan, who has recently been in Paris, conducts herself with considerable dignity and successfully maintains her *new* status in *her own* country, which on the whole must be no easy task for her.' Andrée Carron would be a shadowy figure like most of the Aga's wives. Later she would live in Switzerland, styling herself as Princess Andrée and appearing at certain social functions. She remained rooted to her simple home-loving ways. And in some respects the Aga's preference for her would illustrate a profound truth about him. He may have been a lion in pre-war British society, he may have escorted many high-born British women, but when it came to marriage he chose a simple provincial French girl. Probably, as Diana Cooper suggests, he felt more comfortable with them; cosy, undemanding, unlikely to interfere with his life and patterns of behaviour.

Perhaps he was too much a part of the Raj's mould to break completely free of it. He could be an observer of British society, friends with the people who were society, but not really be a part of it. To marry into upper-class English society would have meant breaking through the thin but clear sexual and racial barrier which separated Indians from the British. That fight he left to his son Aly.

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Chapter 20

Aly
The Making of an Heir

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Aly's reaction to his father's re-marriage was one of disbelief, quickly followed by unbearable distress. If Aly had come to terms with his mother's death, he had only done so by creating a memory of a woman both wronged — by his father — and almost completely flawless. This was hardly surprising. For the first twelve years of his life, until Theresa had died, she and her relations were the only family Aly had. He had not seen his father's family until he was eleven, and his father was a distant, infrequent visitor — often laden with gifts, but never succeeding in becoming a real father. Although Theresa had often been very strict with Aly, he remembered not the rows he had with her, but her care and devotion. In later years, friends would discover that the quickest way to Aly's heart was through his mother's memory. George Criticos would often invoke Theresa's memory to get Aly to do something — or not to do something.

As the Aga's unofficial agent in London (see illustration, page 235), Criticos had become quite close to Aly — he was probably closer to him than the Aga himself. He often met Aly, more so after he began to live with the Waddingtons. Often there were messages from the Aga to relay, or more likely, packets of money and gifts. It was a sort of Victorian situation where, with the Master remote, it was the Master's servant who really knew and cared for the Master's boy. The Aga was aware of Aly's unhappy reaction to his marriage and begged Criticos to try and explain the situation to Aly. This was not easy. Everything the Aga had done since Theresa's death seemed to Aly to desecrate her memory.

In 1921, the Aga had built for Theresa a red-tiled Florentine mansion on the Boulevard Prince de Galles. Nicely located in that hilly suburb of Nice, it was called Villa Terpsichore. As long as Theresa was alive, the Aga never lived there. On his visits to Nice he had preferred the Atlantic Hotel, or even the Negresco, but soon after Theresa's death he made it his home. For Aly, the shunned Theresa acquired a glow , while Andrée appeared as the ogre stepmother from classical fairy tales.

George found that Aly was so bruised and angry at the Aga's marriage that he wouldn't hear about the possible reasons, or about Andrée. She is your father's wife, you cannot wish her away, reasoned George and, almost

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in desperation, suggested that perhaps Aly might want to meet her. It would make a nice pleasant trip, George and his wife would come along, and they would visit Aga at Cap d'Antibes and take in Monte Carlo, where Theresa was buried. Aly reluctantly agreed.

Though Andrée was tactful and understanding, Aly was not completely won over — that took many years — and on the way back, George and Aly visited Theresa's grave in the cemetery at Monte Carlo where she was buried next to her infant child, Mahdi, the brother that Aly never saw. 'When I die, George,' Aly told Criticos, 'that is where I want to be buried too.'

Aly had no head for books — all his tutors agreed. While the Waddington library would have absorbed any other young man, for Aly that adolescent upbringing in the English countryside was memorable for the 'horsey' opportunities it provided him. The country, then even more than now, meant the fox-hunting crowd, and Aly was soon introduced to that. As the son of the man who dominated London Society it could not have been very difficult, but while the Aga cut a dash in Lady Emerald Cunard's drawing room, his son Aly did not quite have his own way in the Southdown Hunt or the Warwickshire Hunt, areas where the Waddingtons had their houses. If the memory of Aly's friends and associates are any guide, then in these fox-hunting circles Aly, a half-caste, was a 'greasy green wop'. Much of this was understated, though one story later related by Aly's American biographer describes how in a particular point-to-point race, Aly, in second place, kept pressing forward, pleading more room from the rider blocking his way. Eventually the man turned and shouted, 'Shut your bloody mouth, you goddamned nigger.' This anecdote has the ring of the deep South, rather than deep Sussex, about it, but Aly's early years in England were certainly not happy and it soon became evident that any hope of his going to Cambridge was fanciful.

He was, of course, immensely rich from what his mother left him, besides the money with which his father was providing him and the promise — reportedly of a £2,500,000 trust fund when he became twenty-one. But there was still something missing, something that bothered him, that Andrée Carron, who later became friendly with him, never discovered.

It was perhaps not surprising that Aly's early friendship should have been with older men; Michael Beary, the Aga's first jockey for six seasons, and then Joe Coyne, the American actor. Aly was seventeen, impressionable, and in need of love and attention. Every now and again, George Criticos would drive him down to Dick Dawson's stables and gallops at Marlborough. The young boy, fascinated by horses and eager to learn, would try and drink in every bit of information. It was Michael who introduced him to the parties and the amusements then going around London, including his first all-night party. Aly picked up sufficient horse knowledge to be able to make money buying and selling horses, supplementing the £800 a year that the Aga provided. It was when he was twenty-one and inherited some of the trust money his father had put aside for him that Aly began to spend more in the style he wanted.

In 1929, Aly moved to London. He rented a large house in Carlton House

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Terrace and told anybody who would listen that he required all the space because he hoped to study in peace for his Bar exams. His ambition, he said, was to hunt a pack of hounds in Ireland, before settling down in India in about three or four years' time. The Aga had persuaded Charles Romer, a young barrister whom he met through his solicitor, to take Aly on, and Aly revelled in the more liberated atmosphere of London. He drove to Romer's office in a blue Alfa Romeo. Though he did little as a law student, for two years' running he won the bar steeple chase of the Pegasus Club, an organization which catered for lawyers and students who were interested in racing.

But just as Cambridge had slipped away, so did qualifying for the Bar. In a short time, Aly had given up his spacious house at Carlton House Terrace and bought a maisonette in Alford Street, Mayfair. It was the sort of house that was, and will always be, popular in London and, in that period, almost a requisite for a young man of means making his way in London society. Through his friendship with Michael Beary, Aly met Edgar Wallace, who also wrote a racing column for the *Daily Mail* where Aly's first winnings as an amateur jockey got a mention. This was the world of Sebastian Flyte, a world that was almost joyously decadent, a world where nothing much happened yet almost everybody felt they were in the centre of things, making and running the universe. It was a world of parties, of grand houses and grand cars, a world of much dancing and drinking of champagne, a world where 'gays' meant not a social minority, but the social élite.

Aly had an advantage compared to other well-heeled Englishman, he carried the Aga's air of mystery, of great things beyond the seas. He was not just Aly Khan, but Prince Aly Khan. Few knew how he had acquired the title, fewer still wanted to know. The Aga's position, far from hindering his son, helped him. On 25th March 1929, from Villa Terpsichore, the Aga wrote to Colonel Patterson of the India Office. He had recently met Colonel Patterson's brother in Cairo and they had got along famously, and he thought the Colonel might be able to help him:

> I am writing to ask you what arrangements are being made for the Courts this year.... I am most anxious to attend one of the Courts as I always do. My son Aly has now come to the age when, according to the Indian custom, he can make his bow and I would like to take him with me to the Court I attend. He can then start his studies at the university knowing that he has done his humble duty by paying his respects to his Sovereign or his Sovereign's representative.

The request may have seemed trivial enough, but for the India Office it carried all sorts of implications. Was Aly the heir apparent to the Aga? How was his status affected by the fact that he was the product of a mixed marriage? Would the Government be involved in any problems of succession, apart from the normal one of the continuance of the pension and the title of His Highness? But the Government of India reassured London. The marriage was legal under Mohammedan law and the Bombay

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Government were confident that the Khoja community had accepted Aly as the Aga's son and heir apparent. As far as the Government was concerned, Aly was 'being treated as a *provisional* heir apparent (ie. as a person to whom his pension and title would descend if they were continued after his death).' And on this basis Patterson wrote to the Aga informing him that on 9th May 1929, Queen Mary would receive the Aga and his son at Court. In May 1930, the Aga and Andrée arrived in London. She radiated charm, 'all those stories about my jewellery are really much exaggerated.' A few days later the Aga, Andrée and Aly were on their way to Buckingham Palace for the Court presentation that the Aga had so tirelessly campaigned for. To the great British public, the Aga's backstage manoeuvres were not known, of course, and to them he was one of the recognizable and lovable heroes of the British Empire. Also, his horses won races. As his limousine swept down the Mall, and the Aga's characteristic figure was recognized, there were shouts of 'good old Aga'.

Aly looked quite stunning in an outfit he had designed himself; a white knee-length Indian tunic with a high collar, topped by a white turban, at the centre of which was an egg-sized emerald. He did not, however, go down very well with the Prince of Wales who instinctively loathed Aly and what he wore, maliciously describing him later as 'a swarthy little Baby Bunting'. The Prince may have been upset because he had to attend the presentation at all. George V had a bad attack of rheumatism, and Queen Mary was escorted for the presentation by her eldest son. But if the Prince of Wales was not impressed, to one woman Aly was the only man in the room.

She was Margaret Whigham, daughter of George Hay Whigham, whose Scottish ancestry was long and prominent and who had made his money in America, where Margaret had been educated. Just three weeks before the Court presentation, Margaret had held her 'coming out dance', wearing one of the first dresses designed by Norman Hartnell — a long, slinky, sleeveless gown that made her look, in the style of the day, like an elusive Noël Coward heroine. That day at Court, wearing another Hartnell creation, Margaret was just rising from her curtsy to Queen Mary when 'my attention was suddenly caught by an incredibly handsome young man standing behind the Queen.... For a split second our eyes met, before I had to turn and walk away from the throne. I wondered who he could possibly be.' Margaret did not have to wait long. The next night, Lord and Lady Louis Mountbatten gave a ball at Brook House and she was formally introduced to Aly Khan. Everything about Aly seemed to enchant Margaret: his youth — just nineteen — his jet black hair, his magnificent brown eyes. That night they danced every dance together, and for Margaret and Aly it was love at first sight. Royal Ascot was soon upon them, and the two lovebirds spent it together, with Aly a guest at Margaret's parents' country home at Queen's Hill.

It was an Aly far removed from the cynical playboy image of the man that we carry. This was young Aly, full of puppy love and, Margaret thought, a mixture of correct English behaviour and possessive Oriental instincts. Ascot Week meant one — or more — party every night, dances

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all evening. After one of them, guests ended up in Margaret's bedroom, laughing and gurgling, sipping champagne. But, as Margaret recalls,

> all except Aly. The next morning I noticed he was very silent and looked glum. I asked him what was wrong and why he had disappeared the night before. He answered me in a voice of misery, saying that he had no right to go into my bedroom, and that he hated the thought of anybody else — even women — being there.

Maybe this would have always been a barrier, but Margaret was never put to that test because her father, George Hay Whigham, soon settled matters. Some time during that Ascot week, Aly and Margaret, deeply in love, decided to marry. Aly asked for her father's consent. For Whigham, Aly's social connection or wealth meant nothing. As far as he was concerned, Aly was just a black man; he had not much cared for his daughter's flirtation with him and was horrified at the prospect of Margaret having black babies. Margaret pleaded with her father, protesting that Aly was not black, but Persian, and that in any case his mother was Italian, so it was most unlikely that their babies would be black. But George Whigham would not relent. He forbade Margaret to see Aly, or dance with him at parties. Friends and others were told that Margaret and Aly could not marry because they were too young.

Young love could not be so easily denied — at least not for some time. Aly and Margaret returned to London and continued to meet. It was, despite its reputation, a very formal world. In fact, Margaret Whigham thinks the thirties were a more 'moral' age than the twenties, largely because of a reaction against the fast-living, hard-drinking decadence of the jazz age. Life, recalls Margaret, may have been frivolous in the thirties, but it was 'proper'. In that first London season Margaret was never allowed out during the day, except in the company of her mother or her nanny. On the one occasion she was permitted to venture out alone, a good-looking man sporting a Guard's tie, spoke to her as she came out of the Ritz. Margaret thought they were acquainted and happily sauntered down as far as the Berkeley. It was only then, with a certain frisson, Margaret realized that they had never met before, and she was being 'picked up'. She ran into the Berkeley, frightened out of her wits, and sat in the cloakroom, shivering, for an hour. Now, as George Whigham forbade Aly to even telephone her, the two lovers exchanged letters. Fortunately for Margaret, her nanny, who like many nannies at that time thought only the Prince of Wales was good enough for Margaret, approved of Aly, and she and Aly's Indian servant acted as go-betweens, ferrying letters back and forth between Audley Square, where Margaret and her parents lived, and Alford Street — a few hundred yards away. Aly's letters had all the passion and tenderness of first love.

Occasionally, they managed to slip away; Aly escorted Margaret to the Derby in June. The Aga had two horses running and to Margaret's great thrill, Blenheim, an 18-1 outsider, streaked home. When George V

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summoned the Aga to the Royal Box and asked him, 'how much did you have on it?' the Aga replied, 'not a penny.' That night there was a party at the Embassy Club in Bond Street. The Club was the most 'in' place in London at that time, not so much for its décor which was rather simple, but its elegance, its food, its music and the clientèle that it attracted. The corner table was reserved for the Prince of Wales, and his latest escort (very often Mrs Freda Dudley Ward); another table would have King Alphonso of Spain; a third, the Mountbattens; and there was also one for the Duke of Westminster.

The Prince of Wales had set the sartorial fashion for the club, his habit of wearing dinner jackets in restaurants was followed by other men, as was the basic tone of the Embassy — a place where married men dined with each other's wives. Debutantes were not generally welcome, but Margaret persuaded the committee to make her an honorary member. She became so popular there that her arrival would often be greeted by the band playing 'I've got a crush on you'. When Margaret and Aly tired of the Embassy Club it was always the Café de Paris, where one could watch great cabaret stars like Beatrice Lillie and where the famous curved staircase leading to the dance floor tempted many a woman to try and make a spectacular entrance. For Aly, these public occasions were sometimes a trial. He would often be seen sitting alone at a table, moodily watching Margaret in the company of others. On 27th June 1930, Aly wrote to Margaret for the last time.

Margaret would later think that it was a 'strangely mature' letter from one so young, and so much in love. There were a few more nights at the Embassy Club to be endured; he sitting alone, sipping orangeade and requesting the band over and over again to play 'I've got a crush on you'.

Aly soon left England, and though he and Margaret promised to write to each other — and did keep in touch — the romance was dead. Margaret Whigham insists their relationship was 'pure', there was no sex involved and that it was indeed 'a golden romance in a golden summer.' That was the Aly she knew and loved at nineteen, not the Aly who would later become an international playboy and one of the great lovers of our age. Maybe the trauma of that early love, rejection by George Whigham — who towards the end would not even speak to Aly — embittered him. Maybe the racial hurt was the crucial factor. He was later to tell a friend, 'they called me a bloody nigger, and I paid them out by winning all their women.' In the context of his subsequent much-discussed love life, when he seemed to rival Casanova, it seems strange to recall the pristine purity of the summer of 1930, when he was nineteen, and possibly still virginal.

The Aga was probably not too unhappy about the break-up of Aly's romance. His followers had seen little of Aly and if they were to accept him, it was time he was exhibited to them. This was necessary not only for an orderly succession, but also to quieten doubts and fears in the community. The Khoja reformers were back at work, and the Aga was worried about how all this was affecting his constituency. For very nearly three decades after the Memorial to Lord Northcote in 1900, the reformers had been

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quiet. Most of them had either left the community and gone their own ways, or buckled down to accepting the Aga and his idiosyncrasies. But on 1st August, a Karim Goolamali, describing himself as secretary to the Khoja Reformers Society, published 'an open letter to his Highness the Aga Khan'. Goolamali presented a dismal picture of the community: nobody was allowed to protest about the Aga and the way he ran his affairs, anyone who did ran the risk of being, as Goolamali put it, 'waylaid or struck down in the dark by a "Fidavi" [fanatic] follower of your Highness.'

Though this petition bore some similarity to the early petitions, it was much better written and with a more cogent case against the Aga and his running of the community. The petitioners briefly dwelt on the Aga's ancestry, suggesting that proof of his descent from the prophet was yet to be tested, practices of the Khojas with those of orthodox Islam were contrasted and shown to be contrary to Islamic practice — the Koran was not read, neither fasting nor the pilgrimage to Haj was observed. But the gravamen of the charges was the allegation that the Aga used the community to extract money and live a life of luxury and comfort in Europe:

> The Muslim Zakat is a voluntary contribution of only 2½% on incomes and enjoined in the Koran to be given in the name of God for the benefit of the poor, the needy, the wayfarer, whereas our poor brethren are made to pay about 50% of their income in various shapes to God himself in the person of Your Highness. These exactions are paid in money and in kind. From Karachi alone, there is a regular monthly contribution of about Rs 20,000 to say nothing of other places from which similar contributions are levied.... In addition to these regular contributions, there is a periodic drain of immense sums of money, jewellery, apparel and other costly offerings taken by Your Highness on the occasion of each personal visit. In the year 1920 Your Highness was kind enough to visit your followers at Karachi and carried away 15 lacs of rupees (Rs 15,000,000) after a stay of only twenty-six days. Only two years later when Your Highness came to visit His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales in March 1922 our brethren paid you, as far as we know, no less than Rs 154,000 — although Your Highness was not with them for more than two hours.

As proof, Goolamali and his friends dissected the rule book which guided the community's affairs. This was a curious document. Though it provided for a council to run the community, the council had no power to change the rules, and everything had to be referred to the Aga, or as he was described, 'Moulana Hazar Imam Sarkar Saheb'. Originally, when the rules were issued in 1920, they bore the signature of the Aga Khan. But, after only a few copies of these rules were circulated, they were replaced by new ones which did not bear the Aga's signature. The petitioners alleged that all this meant was that the Aga was still pulling the strings, but was hiding behind the curtain.

The rules themselves were quoted to demonstrate how everything that

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happened at the Khoja Jamat Khana was connected with collecting money for the Aga Khan. Various rules provided for various ways, and under various names, in which money was collected for the Aga. 'In fact, no religious ceremony is performed in the Jamat Khana which is not associated with the payment of money enjoined on the followers.'

The pamphlet attracted the attention of Christian missionaries who quickly tried to use it to win over the Khojas. The Aga's followers petitioned the Government to ban the pamphlet. Newspapers sympathetic to the Aga denounced Goolamali for his 'meanness' and supported demands that the book be banned. But the political department of the Government of Bombay was not convinced that this could be done, and in any case, they felt 'the language seems to be sober and temperate', and the intention merely to get the Aga to 'redress certain grievances of his followers.'

By May 1928 the open letter had begun to appear in the Indian languages, and the Government of Bombay received a formal request from the Aga Khan's family for the banning of Goolamali's petition. It came not from the Aga — who was already back in Europe — but from Lady Ali Shah. On 26th June 1928, writing from her home in Poona, Lady Ali Shah told the Governor of Bombay that the pamphlet was

> likely to cause considerable tension between the different Islamic sects, and it is doubtless that it will excite the hatred and contempt of those against the Ismailis, especially the illiterate class, if this highly objectionable pamphlet is not immediately suppressed. The offensive aspect of this most dangerous pamphlet is clear, and the law governing it must be enforced for its proscription, which is most essentially necessary.

The Governor did not think anything could be done, but did not want to offend Lady Ali Shah, and once again asked his legal advisers to have a good look. Their opinion had not changed. On 3rd July 1928, the Governor wrote to Lady Ali Shah informing her of this but, aware of the susceptibilities of the good lady and her son, he coated the pill of rejection with the most sugary regrets:

> I am not suggesting for one moment that there is any truth whatever in the argument that any abuses exist ... and I can only regret that, under the circumstances as they have been put before me, the Government cannot proscribe the pamphlet. I am, however, fully confident that practically everyone who sees it will take the same action as I did when it was sent to me, and confine it to the only place for which it is fit — namely, the waste paper basket.

It was against this background that the Aga decided to send Aly to visit his followers. Aly had the style, the manner, the bearing of an Englishman, and would provide a useful rallying point for the younger, educated members of the community who had done quite well out of business and

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now wanted to win social acceptance. Most of them were willing to believe that it was the Aga's benedictions that had helped them in their business careers. Aly would provide a different sort of benediction; a more modern world they had read about, but could not quite touch. In Raj India, the Aga's followers, like all Indians, had been barred from British clubs and made aware of their subject status. They could bask in the reflected glory of Aly's society doings in Mayfair, and the easy dominance father and son seemed to be exercising over the centre of the British Empire.

Aly's trip took him first to Syria, where he would form a close attachment with the Aga's followers in the country. In many ways, their bedouin ways, the pace, the zest, the sheer volatility and energy which they brought to everyday life enchanted him, and there was something about him that quite conquered Syrian Ismailis. The bond was formed early, and would last until Aly's death — causing a slight problem to the present Aga Khan.

Aly was 'Waliahad', heir apparent; our precious waliahad, our wonderful waliahad, our brave waliahad, our handsome waliahad, our incomparable waliahad, a waliahad to fit the time and the epoch. The Aga may have thought that Aly would make an appeal to the educated followers, but he seemed to make just as great an appeal, if not more, to what his grandmother had called 'the illiterate class'. They could not understand a word of what he said, for he spoke in English not Gujerati, their language. This, far from dousing their ardour, further strengthened it. Truly, he seemed to be a man from another world to bless them, guide them and inspire them. While the Aga was portly and seemed somewhat remote, if not uncaring, there was much in Aly's style, his dash, his way of doing things that endeared him to his followers.

There was his flight in 1932, when Aly flew from Bombay to Singapore. Flying was just coming in, an Indian Parsee called Tata had flown from Bombay to Karachi, and the Aga had actually offered a prize for an Orient flight. But for the Khoja's own waliahad flying was a sensation. Even more was Aly's daring. Three planes took off for a flight from Bombay to Calcutta — 1,200 miles away. Today it is a quick two-hour flight in a modern airbus, then in an open cockpit plane with just a pilot and a passenger, it was more a game of chance. The flight was supposed to terminate in Rangoon, across the Bay of Bengal, and over low Himalayan mountain ranges that separated India from Burma. But Aly decided to fly further, to Singapore. Later it was said that it was because he had arranged to meet a lady in Penang. Whatever the reason, every stage of the flight was marked by cheering crowds, and the journey itself quickly became one of the legends of the community.

Legends were needed just then. In November 1932, Karim Goolamali returned to the attack. His earlier appeals to the Aga had produced nothing, but now, as Aly prepared to visit India again, Karim made a direct appeal to 'Mr Ali Solomon [sic] Khan'. This brought together all the various appeals that had been made against the Aga Khans, ever since the first one in 1864. To this collection, Karim Goolamali added a foreword in the form of a

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letter to Aly. The letter mentioned that since the last appeal in 1927, there had been further threats against the reformers. They had been attacked and some killed. Karim Goolamali hoped that Aly realized he was being 'used as a pawn in the game your father, the present Aga Khan, is playing.' He suggested that the young man renounce the claim to divinity and work in the open, 'honest role of a human leader of the community, striving for the mutual uplift of his following and of himself; a role which the great temptations pervading the other course of life have hitherto prevented any one of your ancestors from adopting.'

Aly made no response to the appeal, though Government agents were to report that the appeal seemed to have had an effect. Aly was personally just as popular as he had been, and his visit had aroused great enthusiasm. Crowds of Khojas gathered in the various places that Aly visited, his visits generally meant marriages in the community, as all couples, particularly the young, wanted their wedding to be blessed by his presence, and they worshipped him as a living God. But, reported Government agents, the shrewder members of the community were not quite as generous with the special donations and offerings that marked the visit. The Aga's accountants found Aly's visit had not netted quite so much money as the one before.

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Chapter 21

The Round Table Game

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On 31st October 1929, Lord Irwin, now Viceroy in India, made an historic announcement declaring that the goal of British rule in India was to provide the country with dominion status. For this purpose, said Irwin, a conference would be held to discuss the issues involved. The politics behind that declaration were complex and have been expertly analyzed by Robin Moore in his seminal *The Crisis of Indian Unity 1917-1940*. For our purposes it is sufficient to say that the Aga played no part in the declaration, either at the British end or at the Indian end; his role came once the announcement was made, as a channel for Muslim opinion.

On 7th November 1929, *The Times* carried an article by the Aga Khan. In the typesetting favoured by newspapers then, particularly *The Times*, there was a three-decker heading to this long article:

British Policy in India
The Historical Setting
An Ambition and a Goal

The Aga welcomed Irwin's declaration as 'this marvellous episode in world history', which would finally remove doubts which may have arisen 'in India as to the ultimate aim of British policy.' Then, after reviewing the history of British rule at some length, he cleverly mixed criticism of current British administrators by contrasting them with ones in the past:

> Of one thing I am convinced if Indian statesmen will take as their models Malcolm and his successors down to Willingdon and Irwin, rather than the men who lost the American colonies, they will ultimately be able to dispense with the British Army in India.

The old India hands, nettled by this and the prominence *The Times* gave to the Aga's article, tried to pick holes in his argument. By the time the debate ended in January 1930, Conan Doyle had been dragged into it, demanding that the Aga define the Muslim goal in India.

The debate may have been characteristic of the many that had been carried out in *The Times* correspondence pages — probably part of those

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which have provided its considerable reputation. The debate also illustrated the Aga's technique. While he never frontally criticized the British Empire, almost invariably he welcomed and accepted practically every official pronouncement, he could now shrewdly use these pronouncements to argue what may be called a moderate, semi-nationalist line. In 1904, his letters to Walter Roper-Lawrence, as we have seen, indicated that his analysis of the British predicament in India was more acute than that of other loyalists — even if his solutions were unworkable. Now as the nationalist agitation in India sharpened and the Hindus and Muslims threatened to go their separate ways the Aga, using his platform at *The Times*, occasionally twisted the lion's tail — but ever so gently. He also kept himself in the public eye, in the pages of the top people's paper where it mattered.

Meanwhile a Statutory Commission, headed by the tight-lipped, very British John Simon (later to be Foreign Secretary) and including Clement Attlee, had gone round India to Congress shouts of 'Go home, Simon.' Simon did indeed come home to prepare his report which was issued in the summer of 1930. A conference, soon dubbed The Round Table Conference, was called for the autumn of that year. This was to be the first of three Round Table Conferences that were to dominate Indian politics and British-Indian affairs for the next three years. If the first conference was Hamlet without the prince, the second gave up the ghost of any settlement of the Indian question within the British Empire. Even before the first conference assembled, even before Simon had properly returned home, Congress — the main nationalist party in India — had made it clear that it would have no truck with Irwin's Round Table ideas. Gandhi, pressed by his militants, the young Nehru and Subhas Bose, now made complete independence the goal of the Congress.

In 1930, with his historic march to the sea and the symbolic making of salt as a breach of the British-imposed ban on it, Gandhi launched his second great civil disobedience campaign, whereupon the Raj cracked down on the Congress and jailed Gandhi. The other Indian delegates gathered in London to discuss India's future. Apart from Gandhi, there was everybody and anybody connected with India.

Muslims provided sixteen members, including Jinnah and a rising young man called Zafrullah Kahn. The Aga was easily chosen as the leader but the strings of this delegation were pulled by a man who never actually came to London, Fazl-i-Husain, who had developed a strong political base in the Punjab and had just become a member of the Viceroy's Executive Council. Fazl-i-Husain did not much care for Jinnah's conciliation to the Hindus and he saw the Aga providing a check on any concessions in that direction. Fazl liked the Aga and easily ensured that he was elected leader.

The conference itself has been vividly recalled by Malcolm Muggeridge in his memoirs, *The Green Stick*:

> It was a tremendous turnout — Maharajahs and other Indian princes, the Aga Khan as huge as Chesterton, knights brown and white, turbans and shining pates, politicians, policemen, and even an odd member of

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The Aga congratulated as he leads in Bahram (F. Fox up), his winner of the 1935 Derby.

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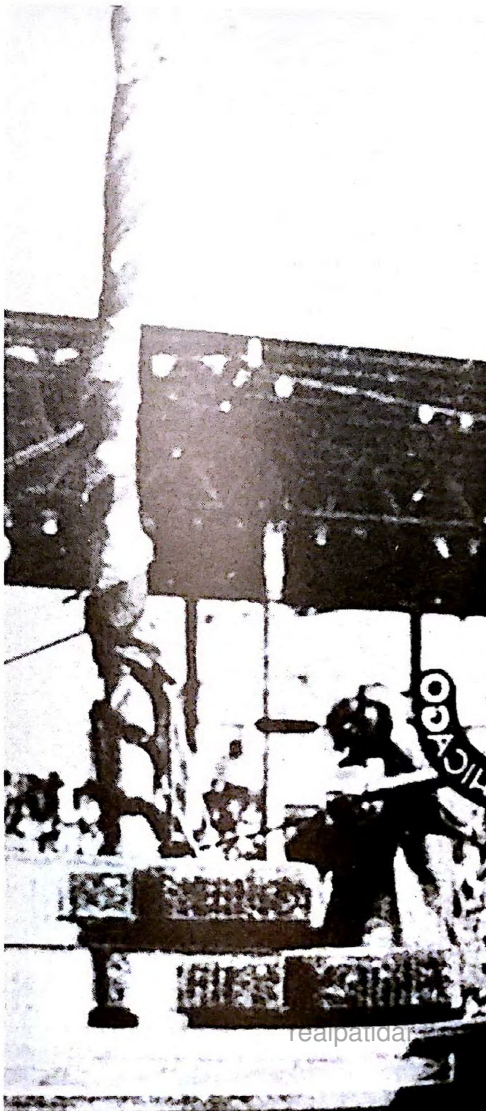
The Begum Aga Khan, formerly Andrée Carron, the Aga's third wife, in her presentation dress.



he Aga Khan in Bombay in 1946 for his
iolden Jubilee when he was weighed

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outside the Ritz Hotel in London.

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rincess Aly Khan, formerly Mrs Loel
uinness, mother of Karim.

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y Khan and Rita Hayworth after their
dding at Vallauris in the South of
ance.

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The Aga Khan III and the Begum, his fourth wife, formerly Yvette Lebrusse, in Cannes in 1957, the year of his death.

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Aly Khan with his son Karim Khan, aged nineteen.

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The Aga Khan IV and the Begum in their wedding clothes.

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HH the Aga Khan IV.

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the public vaguely curious to know what, if anything, was to happen to the brightest jewel in their Sovereign's crown. Presiding was the then Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald, already on the way to total incoherence and irresolution which marked the last stages of his political career. His opening address was vintage stuffy, containing, as I recall, a remarkable appeal for 'the lion (I don't know which is the lion) to lie down with the lamb (I don't know which is the lamb).' It gave rise among those present to a sort of lions and lambs game with everyone trying to decide to which category they belonged. Only King George V seemed quite certain; he, it was clear, considered himself indubitably belonging to the lions.

The Aga made his own contribution to the sea of words that were to drown the conference. As leader, however, his room for manoeuvre was strictly limited. Every time he was inclined to respond to the overtures made by the Hindus and other non-Muslims, Fazl-i-Husain, expertly orchestrating Muslim opinion back in India, restrained him. Not only did Hindus disagree with Muslims, but even the Muslims disagreed amongst themselves, and during the Conference one Muslim delegate called Jinnah 'a little liar'. After the Conference, Jinnah was, for a time, to withdraw from Indian politics and retire to live in Hampstead. The Conference reached its nadir one Saturday at Chequers where delegates had been taken by motor buses to meet Ramsay Macdonald. Hindus and Muslims fought with such ferocity in front of MacDonald, that the Prime Minister was quite taken aback. The Aga was so pessimistic that he did not think the British could solve the problem, even in a hundred years, and suggested it might be better to retire and let the Hindus and Muslims battle it out. Not surprisingly, the Conference achieved nothing.

But for the Aga it had re-established his position as the leader of the Indian Muslims. Jinnah was in disgrace, and at the end of the Conference Shafi, who had not always agreed with the Aga on all the compromises he had mooted with Sapru, moved a resolution recording the gratitude of the Muslims to the Aga 'for services rendered to his country and his community at the Conference.'

The only question mark seemed to be his health, again. During the short Christmas break at the Conference, the Aga had fallen ill and almost as soon as the Conference ended he left London for Paris to recover. By the summer he was back with his usual vigour and in early June 1931 addressed the Press Club on the Derby stakes and, a few days later at the Hotel Victoria, he spoke on the future of mankind.

By then the plans were ready for a second Round Table Conference with Gandhi in attendance — the Raj and the Congress having worked out a compromise. Irwin too arrived back in England for a holiday and met the Aga Khan. He had hoped to have a long chat with him but in July the Aga left for Aix-les-Bains and Irwin wrote to Fazl-i-Husain that he supposed 'that he [Aga] would naturally like the lead of the Muslims at the Conference as he did before....'

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Fazl-i-Husain was in his element as king-maker, and on 24th August 1931, replied to Irwin that 'Aga Khan will naturally take the lead of the Muslims at the Round Table Conference and I have no doubt the Muslims will feel most grateful to you for the advice and help you may be good enough to give them.' In April 1931, Fazl-i-Husain had 'stage managed' another All-Parties Muslim conference. While the Congress naïvely clung to the opinion that all the Muslims were interested in was separate electorates, Fazl-i-Husain now transformed the Muslims' separate electoral demands to calls for separate executive authority.

The Aga, in his *Memoirs*, blamed the failure of the second Round Table Conference — and the Hindu-Muslim impasse — on Gandhi and his lack of sensitivity. He describes a midnight meeting in the sitting room of his suite at the Ritz Hotel in November 1931 when Gandhi, wearing his loin cloth topped off by a large shawl that still left his legs uncovered and his sandals visible, is grinning. The Aga, in a three-piece pinstripe suit with a bow tie to match has, if anything, an even larger grin and it is only Mrs Naidu who looks sombre and a bit worried.

According to the Aga, once the photographers had gone and the three had settled down to a private conversation, the Muslim leader told Gandhi that if he acted as a real father to the Indian Muslims he was sure they would respond and help him in his struggle for India's independence. Gandhi replied, 'I cannot indulge in any form of sentiment.' This, argues the Aga, was a 'cold douche at the outset; and the chilly effect of it pervaded the rest of the conversation.' The Aga presided over many more meetings — usually at midnight in his rooms at the Ritz — but for all his labours nothing came of it. The Round Table Conference ended in failure. Had Gandhi been a bit more emotional at that first midnight meeting things might have worked out differently.

Maybe so, but the Aga's memory seems somewhat selective — he has definitely got his dates wrong. Gandhi, Aga declares in his *Memoirs*, arrived in London in November 1931. Two days later, the first formal session of the Conference began, the Muslim delegate Shaja'at Ahmed presented his demands and by November the communal deadlock was complete. An India Office representative warned the King's secretary the deadlock might not be broken and the British Government might have to take matters into its own hands and announce a policy for India. It is understandable that the Aga should have got confused about the dates. For though he was the leader of the Muslims, he missed the opening two months of the Conference and was busy with the League of Nations at Geneva discussing the admission of Turkey, and then with the World Economic Conference in late September. He did not arrive in London for the Conference until 17th November 1931, by which time the Muslims had already organized the minorities and presented a 'pact' to the Conference.

Perhaps in the long view, conferences of this nature were bound to fail. Gandhi was under pressure from his own militants, Nehru and Subhas Bose, to re-start the civil disobedience campaign. Within days of his return

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to India — 28th December 1931 — the Government arrested Gandhi and swung its entire machinery to crush the Congress.

The second Round Table Conference had seen Gandhi being acclaimed as a sort of folk hero — even if his own success at the Conference was limited. As evidence of this he made in September a broadcast to America. Almost as a riposte, the Aga had broadcast to America on 27th of that month explaining the Indian Muslim position. It was a cleverly worded speech, designed specifically for the American audience who did not know much about India, let alone the divisions of the country between Hindus and Muslims. The peroration was classically American: 'The Moslems will, however, fight shoulder to shoulder with their Hindu brothers for a constitution which will give India stable government of the people, by the people, for the people, for the equal good and advancement of all — not for the advancement of any particular caste or creed, which would hold the others in its grip.'

The Indians, having failed to present a united demand to the British, had left the British to work out their own proposals. In November 1932, yet another Round Table Conference — the third — was held. It was a smaller, tighter conference but the amount of verbiage it produced was no less. But now the Government saw it as preparing a way for parliamentary legislation: a White Paper would be issued, followed by a joint committee of both Houses of Parliament to hear witnesses, and eventually a Bill to be prepared for parliamentary approval. The Aga was, of course, a Muslim delegate to this Round Table Conference and when, on 15th December 1932, members of both Houses of Parliament assembled in Committee Room 10 to meet the Muslim delegation, the Aga used the occasion to discuss the distinctive culture of Muslim India. A year earlier he had broadcast to America the joys of benevolent dictatorship, now he re-stated the arguments that Syed Ahmed Khan had used in favour of British rule in India; British India provided Muslims with the full enjoyment of religious liberty. But, the Aga added, no system of government would be acceptable if it did not 'provide specifically for the safeguarding of those cherished rights.' *The Times* was sufficiently impressed by this speech to headline it 'a distinctive culture'.

The next few months brought the Aga both public acclaim and private joy. In January 1933, Andrée Carron, having borne the protracted sessions of the Round Table Conference with some fortitude, entered the American Hospital at Neuilly, just outside Paris. She was pregnant and soon to give birth to the Aga's second son, Sadruddin Khan.

Although Sadruddin was born into a world very different to that of his elder brother Aly, he too saw little of his father in his early months. The spring and summer of 1933 was particularly busy for the Aga. In January 1933, the White Paper on Indian Reforms was published, and the Aga was appointed Chairman of the British Indian Delegation that was to give evidence to a Parliamentary Joint Select Committee on Indian Reform. There were various meetings and various public engagements. In June 1933, speaking in the House of Commons at a meeting arranged by the National

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League, the Aga suggested that British businessmen might get more trade from Muslim countries if they learned Persian or Arabic. A month later, on 24th July, a reception was held at the Dorchester in the Aga's honour where fellow British Indian delegates vied with one another to pay tributes to him. It was suggested that the greatest service the Aga could do for India was to win the Derby, and most delegates warmly commended the Aga's unobtrusive working behind the scenes in the previous three years' constitutional discussions.

What the delegates did not know was that behind the scenes the Aga was actually working on a personal plan dear to his own heart — one he felt crucial to the existence of the Aga Khan family. Publicly he was all in favour of the constitutional reform that the British Government was now planning for India; privately he had grave doubts. Though these reforms were limited, they provided for elected governments in the provinces which, the Aga felt, could threaten his family's livelihood. For all his social status, under the law he was merely an ordinary Indian citizen, answerable to the law and the legislature.

What if a new, elected provincial government stopped his collecting his money from his followers? That would make life impossible in India.

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Chapter 22

The Search for an Aga State Part I

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In September 1933, after his traditional holiday at Aix-les-Bains, the Aga arrived in Paris to stay at the Ritz Hotel in the Place Vendôme. From there he addressed a very private and confidential Memorial to the British Government, returning to his old practice of using the notepaper of the Marlborough Club. This Memorial was probably the most important he had ever written. It was addressed to the Viceroy, Lord Willingdon:

> I beg to submit for your consideration a memorial, praying that my status as a Ruling Prince of the first class of the Bombay presidency may be regularised with a grant of some small territory with ruling powers over any area that may be selected for the purpose, in order to give my heirs and successors the permanent and influential status in India consistent with the prestige and dignity of my ancient lineage and that my family traditions of loyal and devoted service to the British Crown.

The honours conferred on him were personal and for the period of his life. Without hereditary powers his family would suffer, 'and even a remote possibility of our family prestige suffering in any way in India after my death would be almost fatal to our hereditary spiritual authority and would lower us in the eyes of the public and our own people.'

The Aga did not mind where he achieved his state: Sind, elsewhere, even in no-man's land, as long as it was within 'His Majesty's vast domains.' The letter contained the usual reiterations of loyalty to the British Crown and the value and the influence of the Aga. But this time there was a certain edge of pathetic urgency. Winds of change were blowing through political India and the Aga feared the worst. The Aga also sent a copy of it to Sir Samuel Hoare, the Secretary of State for India. The valedictory tone of the Memorial was repeated in the letter to Hoare:

> I leave the fate and future of my house in the hands of the highest authorities of the Empire to be decided as they think fair, just and above all in the interests of Great Britain who has always been served so devotedly by my predecessors and myself.

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In 1915, when he had begged for — and received — the rank and status of a first class Chief of the Bombay Presidency he had expressly disclaimed any rights to territory. It was a personal honour granted to him for life. Now the first reaction of the India Office was once again to examine the origins of the Aga Khan and the Khojas. A long note by P. J. Patrick traced their history and doubted that the tortuous claim of the Aga to be descended from Ali, son-in-law of Mohammed and the first Imam of the Ismailis, could be sustained. But if it could, there seemed to be a contradiction. The Shias were inclined to dissociate their religious leader from any temporal power. 'It seems anomalous,' noted Patrick, 'that in India the Aga Khan should desire the *status* of a Ruling Prince having regard to the religious history of the Shias.'

Soon after this the Aga invited Patrick to have lunch with him, but during the lunch the Aga never once referred to the Memorandum, and the only hint he gave of it was when he stressed to Patrick the fact that since the Old Man of the the Mountains, his predecessors had never hesitated to appear in arms at the head of their followers, somehow attaching themselves either to Persian Shahs or other leaders. This, the Aga stressed, was in contrast to other Oriental religious leaders who preferred to remain in semi-divine obscurity like the Buddhist Llamas or the Maharajas Dhiraja of Nepal. The Aga was leaving shortly for India and he suggested that Patrick might give him a book list so that he could read on the voyage.

The Aga had decided it was time Andrée Carron saw the country where her husband was born. On 1st December 1933 he sailed for Bombay, arriving on the 15th to an enthusiastic reception. He told the welcoming party that the Secretary of State, Samuel Hoare, deserved credit for what he had done, but Indians must not 'fritter away their energies on futile quarrels among themselves', otherwise they would neither get power nor help the progress of the country.

It may seem Machiavellian on the part of the Aga to publicly support reforms in India, yet privately — and in great secrecy — campaign for a feudal state for himself. But then he was reflecting British policy towards himself. Just then, in parallel to his public activities on the British Indian delegation, there were secret private discussions on the help his followers in the North-West Frontier Provinces might give the Raj.

In early January 1933 George Cunningham, Governor of the North-West Frontier Provinces had proposed that the Aga's 'spiritual influence' be used to counteract the activities of communist agents. Three men with rather odd noses were causing particular concern. One was a tall, fifty-year-old man called Muhammed Akrim Khan, 'with a medium sized nose'; another was a sixty-year-old Arbb Theaji, 'with a Mongolian nose'; and the third was Rajab Bec, 'a very clever man' with 'a Jewish nose'.

On 11th November 1933 the Aga Khan saw Samuel Hoare, and in great secrecy Hoare explained to him the need 'to use his influence on his followers in Gilgit and Chitral against Soviet agents and propaganda.' Three days later the Aga called at the India Office again and was given further details of the exact work required from his followers.

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The Aga's interest in North-West Frontier agencies was not purely altruistic. In 1931, he actually seems to have arranged a concession in the Soviet Union to collect dues from his followers. We don't know what the nature of this concession was because, though it is now more than fifty years since these events took place, the Foreign Office files dealing with the concessions remain withdrawn from public view. However, as Soviet influence in the border areas grew, the Aga's waned, and by 1935 Soviet-inspired revolts had all but stopped any collection of religious dues.

Soon after his arrival in India, the Aga met Willingdon. The Aga, as ever, had chosen his man with skill. Willingdon had been a previous Governor of Bombay and the Aga got on well with him. Willingdon's empathy for Indian Muslims of the Aga's type was well known. He was sympathetic to the Aga's search for land, and over the next two years fought hard to convince London. As a preliminary sop he recommended that he be made a Privy Councillor. This was formally announced on 1st January 1934. But for the Aga this meant nothing and when he next saw Willingdon in Delhi he decided to turn the screw. He told him that if he wasn't given the estate that he wanted, he would dissociate himself from the British and go over to the French. They had offered him the throne of Syria and he was very tempted to accept.

In the inter-war period, the kingships of many Middle Eastern States were up for grabs. Ten years before this there had been some suggestion that the Aga might be made King of Iraq — about the time when he was being proposed for the Nobel Peace Prize — and the suggestion caused a deal of indignation in the India Office, particularly with Sir Arthur Hirtzel. By the mid-30s, the French had been canvassing several prominent Muslims for the Kingship of Syria: the late King Feisal, King Ali, Sherif Abdul Majid, and the ex-Khedive of Egypt, Abbas Hilmi Pasha. The Foreign Office had never heard of the Aga as a likely candidate and, as they reassured the India Office, it was extremely unlikely that the French would turn to a British subject for the Kingship of Syria, or use a heretical Shia leader to rule Sunnis.

Patrick saw his threat to dissociate himself from India and 'angle for a crown in Syria' as 'rather near to political blackmail'. Patrick's conclusion was that the Aga could not stop visiting his followers in India:

> ... so long as any contributions can be got from the Khoja community with the magnet of his occasional presence among the Faithful. There is some evidence that these contributions are diminishing and that the Aly Khan has not made much of a success of the role of religious mendicant. ...We have no accurate means of estimating what he gets from his followers ... Thus it is conceivable that the threat might not turn out to be bluff. One conclusion seems fairly certain. The Aga Khan's political prestige in India does not really rest on his religious prestige as the head of the heretical sect of Shias. It rests much more on the social position that he has been able by means of his wealth and an air of mystery to build up for himself in Europe, and the feeling that he can always obtain acts of help in the highest political quarters.

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During his latest talk with Willingdon the two men had got down to discussing details. As Willingdon reported to Hoare, the Aga:

> told me that a small area in Sind, Baluchistan would satisfy him. I said that it seemed to me very doubtful that he would ever reside in so remote a region, and I asked whether the estate which he already possessed at Poona might not provide a more appropriate solution. He said at once that he would be perfectly content if he were given the position of a ruler in this area. As far as I remember, there is something like fifty acres in extent. I made him no promises of course ... though I have now had a talk to Clancy, my political secretary, about it and he rather likes the idea.

But at the India Office, Patrick objected to the whole idea of 'creating' states. The Raj had restored states to deposed rulers, or transferred states from one ruler to another. But there was no precedent in the history of the Raj for a state to be created for a person who had no right to territory. It would create a dangerous precedent and 'whet' the appetite of several other former princes with more valid reasons for demanding territorial sovereignty. Then there was the political and religious angle:

> In so far as the Aga Khan is a spiritual personality, it [creation of a state] might be represented to be undue favouritism of a dissident sect (as compared with the Kadianis or the Ahmeddiyas or the Boras) to create a territorial status for the head of the Ismailian community.... The Aga Khan's political importance surely depends chiefly on his being a British subject. As the ruler of a state, however small, he would cease to be. Is there any guarantee that he would then continue to be useful to us politically?

It would mean that he would be moved from being an Indian Muslim leader, and a politically active role, to the Ruling Princes group, which was a politically inactive group and an area where the British did not require help. As one official noted 'I believe the Aga Khan's religious and political influence to be on the wane ... and it is extremely unlikely that his son will have any influence at all.'

What really narked Patrick and the other India Office officials was that 'the Aga Khan has used his credit with the Government from time to time to make increasing demands for political recognition, and has generally advanced his request at the time when his defection would be most embarrassing.'

Just before the Aga left India, Willingdon met him and told him nothing could be decided for a year or so. The Aga returned to Europe, and on 10th July 1934 met Sir Samuel Hoare. His reply was no more encouraging. There would be a 'most embarrassing outcry' if such a decision was made on the Aga's behalf while the Government of India Act was being debated in Parliament. Once the Bill was through then the whole matter could be discussed again.

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This was not the only disappointment for the Aga. His value as a Muslim leader was in doubt. The Aga's visit to India was just the thing that Fazl-i-Husain was looking for. The king-maker's role is never easy, and just before the Aga arrived Fazl confessed to another Muslim that despite his 'superhuman efforts' to bring the Muslims together many of them had now betrayed him. Many were now trying to make common cause with the nationalist Muslims (meaning Muslims who were friendly to the Congress) and who in Fazl's eyes were 'nothing but pro-caste Hindus in their views.' It was necessary to do something to try and unite the Muslims and in a letter to a Muslim leader, Fazl suggested:

> I was thinking of taking advantage of his visit and bringing back the leaders who were once with the Muslim conference. I am therefore suggesting for your consideration that His Highness [meaning Aga III] should be presented with an address by the Muslims of India some time in February in Delhi during the session of the assembly. The manifesto for the presentation of the address should be widely signed and contain names of all prominent Muslim leaders of all provinces.

It was a clever plan to convert a social occasion into a political one, but Fazl couldn't get Muslims to agree and it failed. Worse was to follow.

The Aga's search for an Aga state was supposed to be secret but someone in the Indian Government leaked it to a member of the Indian Assembly and, on 16th July 1934, a member of the Indian Legislative Assembly — the Assembly was meeting in the Raj's summer capital in Simla — tabled a question asking if the Government had received any communication on territory from the Aga Khan? The tabling of the question itself exposed the Aga's position. Had he been a proper Indian Ruling Chief the Government could have refused to answer the question, since Indian Ruling Princes and Chiefs were under the suzerainty of the British Crown. The Aga was not a real Indian Ruling Prince and so the Government of India telegraphed the India Office that it proposed a careful stonewall answer on the lines that: 'a confidential communication was received from His Highness the Aga Khan but the Government is not in a position to disclose its nature.'

An answer like that meant admitting that something was afoot — but there was nothing the Government could do. London did feel, however, that it was only courteous to warn the Aga that the secret would soon be out. On 17th July 1934 — the day before the question was to be answered in Simla — P. J. Patrick met the Aga Khan. One of the features of the Aga's relations with British officials was that while, privately, the officials could write the most scathing memos debunking the Aga's pretensions, this never stopped them from fraternizing with the Aga, whose company they enjoyed. In fact many of them, like Patrick, quite relished the paradox.

A change in status, he told Patrick, had become all the more necessary as his followers in India were now being persecuted, by which the Aga meant that there was pressure on them to convert back to Hinduism. During the

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conversation the Aga seemed prepared to accept that the Poona idea was not a feasible one. The rest of India was supposed to be getting a measure of constitutional government, the Indian people would hardly accept a return to hereditary princes. Instead, the Aga proposed (as Patrick recorded):

> The alternative of persuading the Khan of Kalat to accord a small piece of land on the Baluchistan-Bothdia border which could be turned into a principality for him [the Aga Khan] and the model of the Vatican State might be considered. This, he assured, would not require legislation (as would the transfer of British territory) and would be done by agreement between Kalat, H. Viceroy and himself.

While the India Office digested this latest Aga move, the secret was headlined in the newspapers. Questions in the Indian Assembly in Simla, which were generally scornful of the idea, provoked a question in the House of Commons and much newspaper speculation. The *Chicago Tribune* was convinced that conversations between the Government of India and the Aga Khan had reached a fairly advanced stage and well-informed sources were hinting that the Hindu Maharaja of Kashmir, a predominantly Muslim state, would be asked to accept the rulership of a Hindu state, and the Aga installed in his place.

But the disclosures and debates, far from dampening the Aga's enthusiasm merely made him unburden his soul to Mr Patrick. The Aga requested another meeting and, on 24th July 1934, they had a long chat about how best the Aga could achieve 'security' for himself and his family. So far, as we have seen, both Delhi and London had assumed the Aga's search for territory was really a way of ensuring he would retain the status he had enjoyed under the British. Now Patrick found out that the Aga's rather pathetic request arose from the deepest of fears: the right to collect religious dues from his followers. As Patrick minuted the next day:

> The Aga Khan fears the setting up in Bombay of a Wakf's Commission [a Muslim religious Commission that investigated Muslim complaints] to investigate the position as to his right to retain religious dues, instigated by dissatisfied minority of his own followers but abetted by Hindus and ... Congress circles. He claimed that it is by his own initiative and encouragement that a strong Muslim party loyal to the British connection has been built up in the last thirty years and that if he were forced to withdraw his family and funds from India to protect them from spoliation at the hands of a hostile majority in an autonomous province this would be regarded by his adherents as a betrayal of their interest by a British government too weak to protect its friends.

The Aga now proposed three alternatives to Patrick: a small strip of territory bought from the Sultan of Muscat, or similar territory from the Khan of Kalat or one of the British islands of the Aden Peninsula. Patrick got the impression that he preferred either Muscat or the Aden Peninsula as

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this would remove him from any direct connection with India.

But these new Aga proposals made no more sense to the India Office. As Mr Walton, Under-Secretary of State, noted, neither the Sultan of Muscat nor the Aden peninsula, were part of British India. It was British India that gave the Indian Ruling Chiefs protection through the Princes' Protection Act, and through the paramountcy exercised by the Viceroy. A kingship in Muscat or the Aden peninsula would not protect his interests in India, which was what concerned the Aga; all it would do would be to provide him with general immunity from legal proceedings that belonged to any Sovereign Prince.

Territory was not the only thing the Aga was pursuing that summer. He was, as we have seen, leader of the Indian delegation to the League of Nations in 1932 and a Special Assembly dealing with the Chinese – Japanese disputes; he also led the Indian delegation to the Disarmament Conference. In July of 1934 he suggested to the India Office that it would be rather nice if he could be elected Vice President of the League of Nations. No Indian had ever been elected to such a post and it would a great honour for the country.

The Aga was well liked by the other delegations and quite well qualified for the post. The Foreign Office were happy to oblige, and as the British Empire representation on the League of Nations was quite considerable — apart from Great Britain itself, there were delegations from the Dominions and India — it only required a move by the Foreign Office to get its man in. Just before the election, the Aga, shrewdly leaked the story to the *Sunday Referee* correspondent in Deauville. That September Sunday the paper provided a suitably lurid story. The Aga's bid for the vice presidency was seen as part of secret Eastern aims, a tense drama of East and West played out in the setting of the luxury and splendour in Deauville. According to the correspondent, the principal actors were the Aga himself, his own mother and Aly Khan, all three of them living in three luxurious villas along the street of villas in Deauville. It was the mother, said the correspondent, who was pushing the Aga to get more worldly power in order to sustain his spiritual role. We do not know how much of this was Aga family coaching, how much journalistic fantasy. It was the sort of publicity that did the Aga no harm. In November, the Aga was elected to the vice presidency and he resumed his search for territory, with even greater urgency.

In November 1934 he again met Mr Patrick. The Aga was depressed, fearful and desperately keen to get a quick answer from the India Office. Did the British want to preserve him and his family in India any longer? If they did not, minuted Patrick, the Aga wanted:

> to take steps as soon as possible to remove the 'Treasure' from India to a place where it would be immune from distraint following on a decree declaring it to be subject to a Mohammedan law of Wakfs. In HH's view it was certain that the legal process would sooner or later be instituted to lay hands on the Treasure. The Boras were already being subjected to

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persecution and, emboldened by the constitutional changes, the Muslims, encouraged by the Hindu community, would take steps to deprive him of his personal fortune in India.

The only solution was a state in the neighbourhood of the Persian Gulf under the protection of the Crown and outside the new constitution being planned for India, but yet within the security range of British India. The Aga, of course, could withdraw to Europe but, as Patrick observed, while that might preserve his prestige for a time, 'cut off from the East and its religious associations, he could not hope to hand this over intact to his son.'

Worse still, the Aga had no faith in Aly. He told Patrick that 'his son would be a weak and unsatisfactory successor,' and the only way out of that would be to convert the existing Council of Elders of his community which advised the Aga on spiritual matters 'into a body of state ministers giving some more corporate character to the religion.' Patrick was convinced that the Aga was obsessed with the conception of a Vatican State and a college of cardinals shoring up a weak Pope.

Patrick tried to reassure him. The Constitution had not yet come into force, provincial autonomy was still several years ahead, and the British had no intentions of leaving India. In any case, there were safeguards in the Bill for the protection of minorities. The Aga would not be reassured.

A few minutes after meeting Patrick the Aga met Samuel Hoare and reluctantly agreed that he would wait for the Government of India Bill to go through Parliament. The Raj wanted its supporters to go out to India and campaign for its proposals and in the winter of 1934/5, the Aga went back to India and did just that. He much impressed Willingdon who, on 10th February 1935, wrote to Hoare about the Aga's 'tremendous form' and of the great deal of 'very useful work' he had done in Delhi. Just before he left India, the Aga met Willingdon and pleaded for a decision on his future. If he was to remain in India after the Bill was passed, he had to have the full status of a Ruling Prince. Otherwise, once the Bill was passed, he would 'cut adrift from his association with India and arrange for his financial and other affairs.'

While London was relieved that Willingdon had dropped an idea of making Poona into Aga's kingdom, it still found all talk of the Aga creating a sort of Vatican State in the North of India as quite 'fantastic':

> It is not inconceivable that the Khan of Kalat might be induced by the liberal use of the Aga's fortunes to accord him a small claim through our good offices. As regards the Ruler of the Persian Gulf or the Aden Peninsula, I should imagine that considerations of foreign policy would weigh heavily against any proposal of the kind.

But Willingdon was still arguing for the Aga, and the thought that he 'would stick to racing in England and never come out here any more' distressed him. Suddenly there was a new person in charge of India Office to whom he could appeal. On 7th June 1935 Stanley Baldwin, so long

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exercising the 'harlot's' privilege of power without responsibility — which he had accused the press lords of having — now actally took over the job of Prime Minister from Ramsay MacDonald. The Government of India Act was on the Statute Books, Hoare became Foreign Secretary, and his place was taken by the Marquis of Zetland who, as Lord Ronaldshay, had been Governor of Bengal between 1917 and 1922. Almost immediately Willingdon renewed his pleadings for the Aga — and he persuaded Lord Zetland to meet the Aga.

Meanwhile Clancy, Willingdon's political officer, had prepared his considered views and concluded, like Patrick and others, that there seemed no way round the political and other horrendous difficulties of granting the Aga a proper estate in India, 'commensurate with his dignity and position.' Willingdon's old proposal of declaring the Aga to be the ruler of his estate in Poona would, Clancy concluded, 'expose him [Aga] to ridicule.' Clancy felt that the Aga might be mollified if he were reassured that the distinctions he had received in 1916 would be made permanent, even without the grant of territory. Meanwhile, Patrick had discussed the possibility of the Aga purchasing Jask from Muscat, but had been sharply told that this was 'impossible'.

Willingdon now fell back on Clancy's suggestion that perhaps the Aga's title should be made hereditary. To Willingdon, it wasn't a bad compromise; the Aga would be partly mollified and his cold-weather visits to India would mean that Willingdon would have him around to keep the Muslims loyal to the Raj.

But even this proposal met with Patrick's objections. To make the title hereditary would require the King's approval, secondly it would be 'a mistake to offer the Aga Khan anything, as this affords him a jumping off ground for demanding something more.' The most serious objection was that it would mean recognising Aly Khan as successor:

> What is proposed, while it would not help to protect the Aga Khan's property from the distraint of the Courts, would practically commit us to recognising the Aly Khan as his successor as the head of the Khoja community. The young man has a doubtful reputation, and was recently mixed up in a divorce case of a somewhat sensational kind. We do not want to be tied to forcing him on the Khojas if they prefer another man.

Zetland agreed with Patrick.

Unless Willingdon were asked by the Aga of his own accord, he was advised to say nothing to him should the Khoja leader raise the issue on his annual winter visit to India. Just as the India office had thought the matter was settled for some time, fresh doubts arose. The India Office received a letter from the editor of the *Ismaili* requesting a message for the forthcoming Jubilee celebrations of the Aga Khan. Indian rulers, taking their cue from the English monarch, were inclined to celebrate their Jubilees with great pomp and circumstance. The India Office, now extremely wary of anything the Aga proposed, wondered if the Aga's forthcoming Jubilee

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was an underhand way of declaring his status as a Ruler? Eventually it was decided to wait and see until word was received from the Aga as to what the significance of the celebrations was meant to be.

It was 4th November 1935 before Willingdon conceded to Zetland that he could do nothing for his dear Aga:

> I agree with some reluctance that Aga Khan cannot possibly be made a territorial ruler. I would like to do something for him very much, for he has done great public service, but I agree too that to make his title hereditary would bring in his son who, I confess, is not a very desirable person and I should think it almost certain that His Majesty would thoroughly disapprove of such a suggestion. So if he comes out here this cold weather and asks me about the position, I will give him a negative answer with regard to his territorial aspirations and will say nothing, unless he raises it, about his hereditary title.

But the Aga, as we shall see, was not to be satisfied with this. His quest for a country of his own would continue.

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Chapter 23

Egyptian Interlude

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Egypt was a magic country for the Aga. Of the turbulent, often confusing history of the Ismailis, the one he most often referred to was the Fatimid Ismaili dynasty in Egypt in the tenth century. It was then that Al Azhar University of Cairo was founded and the Aga would tell friends — and once Lord Linlithgow — how the kaftans worn by the students there were a forerunner of the cap and gown of Oxbridge. Though the Aga often spoke longingly of Persia as his homeland,it was Egypt he visited very often on his trips to and from India.

Mostly these were social visits — mixing more with the Cairo English, who loved his company — rather than any important political occasions. But in 1935, as there was renewed talk of Anglo-Egyptian negotiations, the Aga saw possibilities of political action. Egypt had a most curious status. Ever since 1922 it was a sort of independent country, but the treaty defining its relations with Britain gave this country such power — on foreign relations, stationing of troops in the country, etc — that Egypt's independence was more nominal than real. By 1935, with growing threats from Mussolini, Britain had begun to think of a new treaty that would give more power to Egypt and calm the periodic anti-British agitation there.

The Aga saw a chance for his brand of diplomacy in all this and in a meeting with Hoare in November 1935 suggested that, should negotiations be opened, he would go there and act as Britain's propagandist amongst the Egyptian Moslems.

But among Hoare's Foreign Office officials this set the alarm bells ringing. One official, doubting whether he had much influence with Muslims other than Khojas, wondered:

> But is the Aga Khan quite disinterested? He evidently does not think much of King Fuad. And I have heard it said that he longs for some territory — if only as a sort of Vatican State. Could he be aspiring to the throne of Egypt — though only vaguely at present?

Nobody was sure how much influence the Aga might have in Egypt and it was decided to ask Sir Miles Lampson, High Commissioner in Cairo. On 20th December 1935 Sir Miles, in his formal letter to Hoare, replied:

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As a leader of the heretical Muslim sect, he would have no religious influence over the Orthodox Muslims in Egypt. I think, therefore, that it would be as well not to give HH any encouragement to assume any special propaganda mission in Egypt, while, however, welcoming in general terms any contributions that he may make to promoting better feelings between Egypt and Great Britain.

But in a strictly and personal confidential letter to Campbell, a Foreign Office official, Lampson revealed a contrasting attitude to the Aga:

I know, and like, the Aga Khan as I think does everyone here. And he would be a pleasant addition to our social community. So much said, my instinct remains all against the proposal ... but I would much rather the Aga Khan did not know that.

Lampson had recorded for posterity what many officials felt about the Aga: great as a socialite, but rather awkward when he wanted to venture into international politics. But the Aga, blissfully unaware of this contradiction, ploughed on. By January 1936 the British had started serious negotiations with the Egyptians on a treaty and the Aga, now in Bombay, got the Governor of Bombay, Lord Brabourne, to telegraph London his renewed offer of services. He was willing to go to Cairo at once and, acting in a private but confidential capacity, help to make a final settlement possible. But in suitable diplomatic language the Aga's offer of services was once again declined. By the summer of 1936 the British and the Egyptians were ready to sign the Treaty, and on 5th August 1936 the Aga, writing from Villa Tanit in the Rue des Villas at Deauville, wrote a fulsome letter to Sir Miles Lampson:

From what I heard in London from some members of the Government and from what I can make out of the newspaper reports I have not the least doubt that what you have accomplished will go down in history as one of the wisest diplomatic triumphs of modern times.

The treaty was signed on 26th August 1936 but the Aga's interest in Egypt did not die and he was soon to get another opportunity to try and get involved in Egyptian affairs. In the winter of 1936 it was proposed that Egypt, as a proper independent country, should become a member of the League of Nations. A special assembly was to be held for this purpose in May 1937. The Aga now began angling for the presidency of this session.

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Chapter 24

The Black Prince

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The Aga may have confessed to Patrick that he did not think Aly was up to much good, or capable of succeeding him as head of the Khojas. But the promotion of Aly as the Aga's successor continued in the community. The India Office kept a wary eye on these developments. On the Aga's instructions, his agents in India regularly sent Mr Tomkin, an India Office official, copies of the community magazine called the *Ismaili*. This was a bi-lingual magazine, partly in English but mostly in Gujerati, one of the Indian languages which most members of the Aga's community in India spoke. The magazine itself was the usual mixture of propaganda and advice: combining practical nuggets with eulogies about the Aga Khan and his family.

A follower may have written to Aly Khan in Paris telling him about the activities they had undertaken in the past year, Aly Khan's secretary had replied that the Prince had read the letter with interest and thanked the follower for sending him the details. Mostly, such things filled its columns, though the advice it gave Ismailis reflected the Aga's deeper purpose. In its issue of Sunday 12th December 1937 it bemoaned 30,000 living in Kathiawar: mostly in villages and struggling for their existence, eking out a precarious living. *Ismaili* frankly admitted that their condition was terrible but blamed the Ismailis themselves for this. These Ismailis, the paper said, were too simple, too rooted in their past and resistant to change. The Aga could do nothing about them, unless they were willing to migrate — either to the cities or to foreign countries. In that case, the Aga Khan's Gold Grant Committee or the Recreation Club Employment Bureau might be able to offer them help.

But what was of real interest was the way they treated Aly. Aly seemed to dominate these issues. In one, his picture was on the cover, completely clothed in Arab gear and riding a horse; the caption said he was very reminiscent of Hazrat Ali, the first Imam of the Ismailis. There were often photographs of the young Aly in his mother's fond arms, Aly posing in a military uniform, one hand behind his back, the other grasping the hilt of a sword, but most significant of all, photographs of Aly with his father the Aga. Always, always in white, skin-tight *churidar* pyjamas tapering at the ankles, and topped by a long, comfortable coat called a *sherwani* that

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reached below his knees. The two men looked incongruous: one slim, elegant and young, the other short, plump and finding the Muslim injunction of kneeling for prayer rather difficult to follow. What struck the India Office was some of captions that accompanied these photographs.

On the cover of one issue was a photograph of the Aga reading a document, sitting on a throne-like chair placed on a dais. Next to him on the dais, but on a less ostentatious chair, sat Aly, looking pretty but rather bored. Behind them stood their followers wearing long robes and circular turbans, mostly standing, one or two sitting on the ground. Before them on the platform was arranged the most delectable of Indian sweets and foods. The caption of the photograph read:

> Mowlana Hazar Imam His Highness the Right Honourable Sir Sultan Mohammed Shah the Aga Khan accepting Bombay Jamat's memani on the auspicious occasion of Ramazan Idd at Hasanabad. His Serene Highness Vali-ahed Prince Aly S Khan is seated with His Highness.

'His Serene Highness' was quite a title for Aly to claim and Tomkins drew the sharp attention of Patrick to this. Patrick noted, 'It may be assumed that HH is doing his best to establish the Aly Khan's position with his followers.' The Aga had already informed the India Office that Aly had been recognized as heir by his followers in Africa and other parts of Asia and 'that by hereditary right he would become Imam of the Ismailis.' The question was whether the India Office should do anything about his unwarranted use of the grand title of 'His Serene Highness'. It was decided that for the moment nothing would be done, except that the Indian Government should be informed that should Aly Khan or the Aga Khan try to use the title in an official capacity, then steps were to be taken to set them right.

Aly Khan's status had already caused a few problems at home. In March 1935 Arthur Watson, the managing editor of *The Daily Telegraph*, heard that Aly Khan had been 'accepted' by the British Government. He wasn't sure what this meant, so he thought this may have been part of the horse trading surrounding the passage of the Government of India Act. He passed the news on to his Lobby Correspondent, Mr. Foss, who in turn referred to Mr Butler of the India Office for advice. The India Office were not at all keen that *The Daily Telegraph* should carry a story linking Aly's 'acceptance' with the Government of India Act. It would not be true, and it would make no sense. It was explained to Watson that when Aly had been presented at Court he had been accepted as 'provisional heir apparent' of his father's pension and title only, 'but there have been no recent developments and [Butler replied] I do not quite see there could be. Still less, how the affairs of the family have any connection with the Bill.'

Maybe it was shouts of 'waliahad' ringing in his ear, maybe the belief that he, too, was the heir apparent to a vast fortune and devoted followers, but as the Aga secretly campaigned for a state in the winter of 1933-34, Aly began to behave a bit like the Prince of Wales. He was only twenty-three,

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yet the virginal romance with Margaret Whigham seemed very far away. It was a new, harder Aly, an Aly less inclined to be emotional, more inclined to be cynical. Since the break-up with Margaret, he had had a number of affairs; quiet, unpublicized and, like the Prince of Wales, generally with older women. The stories were beginning to circulate in society about the Aga's elder son and his conquests. One of them was about a woman of one of the wealthiest and most powerful families in the country. She has come down to us as Peggy. Aly was keen for marriage and so was she, but her husband would not give her a divorce. The affair continued surreptiously, evoking alarm and wonder. So the stories went, and with them a growing legend about Aly's fantastic love-making prowess.

The days of the female orgasm had not yet become public, though privately it was as much a part of sexual society as it is now. It was here that Aly was said to score. Unlike cold Englishmen who could be remarkably self-centred in bed, Aly, it seems, had women's thoughts and feelings uppermost in his mind, and conditioned his body for that purpose. The legend was that Aly, in order to prolong ecstasy, plunged his wrist into a bucket of ice-cold water kept specially for this purpose next to the bed. This would cool him but not the woman, and thus increase the pleasure. Elsa Maxwell, the American gossip writer who, as we shall see, became something of a propagandist for Aly, once asked him whether the story was true (she had heard a slightly different version, of this many-versioned story, which alleged that he dipped his wrist in cool, perfumed water). Aly, laughing, replied 'No. I would be too delirious then to think of such a thing.'

The more plausible legend was that the Aga had trained Aly in the great Middle Eastern practices of love-making. According to this version, the Aga, on one of his youthful visits to Cairo, spent six weeks with an old Egyptian doctor and *hakim*, who had taught the Aga *Imsak*, a technique which enabled a man to 'hold' or 'retain'. As Sir Richard Burton would explain in his translation of the book *A Thousand and One Nights*, the essence was 'to avoid over-tension of the muscles and to pre-occupy the brain.' When Aly was young, the Aga sent him on a similar mission to Cairo, though possibly to a different *hakim* to learn the magic *Imsak*. Whatever it was, in 1934 Aly was already established as a supreme lover. Women would tell one another of the pleasure he could provide, and men wonder about the number of women he seemed able to gather around him and keep satisfied. His prowess was soon to be vividly illustrated.

Just before Easter 1934, Aly Khan was in New York. One evening he was invited to dinner and found himself sitting next to Lady Thelma Furness. Aly knew who she was; for the past four years she had been the mistress of the Prince of Wales and was the twin sister of Gloria Vanderbilt. As the Morgan sisters, Gloria and Thelma had been the quintessential debutantes of 1922.

In 1934, Lady Furness, perhaps not looking quite so rhapsodic as in her youth was in the throes of a marriage that had been singularly unhappy and her four-year affair with the Prince of Wales seemed to be leading nowhere.

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She confessed to Maury Paul, the New York society columnist whose columns about the Morgan sisters had done much to launch Gloria and Thelma, that her life with David was at standstill. She could not be Queen and she had no desire to be one. The time was right for a diversion and Aly, almost instinctively sensing this, was quick to pounce. Almost immediately, as Thelma Furness would later recall, he 'turned his battery of charm on me.'

In a few days, New York society was buzzing with stories about Aly and Lady Furness, and Maury Paul reported the comment that 'Thelma Furness has captured both the white and the black prince.' But relief for Thelma was close at hand — or so she thought. She was sailing for London, and Aly was due to go to Florida. As soon as she walked into her cabin on the SS *Bremen* she found it crammed full of red roses, with the most endearing messages from Aly. 'See you in London, Love, Aly.... You left too soon....' The next morning she was breakfasting in bed when the telephone beside her rang. It was Aly, suggesting lunch. At first, Thelma thought this was a joke. Where would lunch be, Palm Beach or New York? Why, Aly retorted, on the ship. He had caught the ship and from then on the two were inseparable. It is not clear how far this shipboard affair progressed, or whether the romance turned to passion, or love to satisfaction. The day before the ship was due to dock at Southampton, the Prince of Wales rang Thelma. He suggested she drop in to Fort Belvedere for dinner on her way to London. She had already promised Aly a lift and, in any case, did not feel quite up to meeting the Prince just then. 'Very well,' said the Prince, 'we shall dine at your place.'

This had been the first long separation between Thelma and the Prince of Wales. But there was no great warmth when he arrived at Thelma's London house. Rumours about her affair with Aly had followed her to England, and very soon the Prince of Wales said — more of an accusation than a question — 'I hear Aly Khan has been very attentive to you.' Thelma tried to douse the suspicions and went to see her friend, Wallis Simpson, who lived in a flat in Bryanston Court. Wallis and Ernest Simpson had been introduced to the Prince of Wales by Thelma, and just before she went on her visit to the States, Thelma had asked Wallis to look after 'the little man' and see that 'he does not get into any mischief.' Wallis had done that, perhaps rather too well. She assured Thelma there was nothing to worry about, 'Darling, you know the little man loves you very much. The little man was just lost without you.' Even as she spoke, the telephone rang. It was the Prince of Wales; he wanted Wallis, not Thelma, even after Wallis had told him that 'Thelma is here', there was no call to the phone for Lady Furness.

There was one more weekend for Thelma at Fort Belvedere — Easter weekend. Wallis and Ernest Simpson were there too, and a suspicious Thelma seemed to see in every gesture a meaning for her. Wallis and the Prince seemed to be sharing little private jokes over dinner, then came the moment of revelation; the Prince used his fingers to pick up a scrap of lettuce from his plate. Wallis slapped his hand in mock disapproval. Even

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when Thelma had been a mistress of the Prince, she had never been so familiar. She could not believe what Wallis had done, and thought she ought to warn her friend. She caught Wallis's eye and frowned her disapproval. Later Thelma recorded: 'Wallis looked straight at me. One cold, defiant glance told the entire story. I knew then she had looked after him exceedingly well.' The next day, Thelma left Fort Belvedere and never returned. Wallis Simpson reigned supreme, and the rest is history.

The legend is that, but for Aly, Wallis would never have got her chance and the modern story of British monarchy would have been totally different. As the latest biographers of the Windsors put it, 'But for Aly, Thelma Furness might never have lost the Prince's favour; King Edward VIII might never have abdicated; and almost certainly he would have died at home in England, full of the titles and honours, and beloved by his Empire.' This may be, though the character of the Prince of Wales suggests that if there had been no Wallis, one would have to create a Wallis. As for Thelma, she would rue the day that she introduced Wallis Simpson to the Prince of Wales. Having lost the 'white prince', she took up with the 'black prince' in earnest. Aly's assurance, Aly's belief that he was the greatest had already enchanted Thelma, and she soon rejoined Aly in Paris and proposed a driving tour through Spain. Aly, always a man of instinct and ready to accept any plan, leapt at the suggestion. The very next morning they left for Barcelona, Aly providing unbearable excitement by his reckless driving. They toured much of Spain and France and finally ended up at Deauville, where Thelma settled herself in Aly's villa for the season. Gloria Vanderbilt also joined her. Thelma, like the others, was soon to realize and notice the contradictions in Aly. He could be a marvellous lover and wildly thrilling. But there was a streak of the East in him; he could be very possessive and expected his women to meet all his demands. He went to the limit in order to satisfy them, and in return he expected them not to question his judgements. It was probably never meant to be a lasting relationship and before the end of the Deauville season in that summer of 1934, it had cooled. In any case, Aly had found somebody else, somebody more permanent and, in many ways, characteristic of the English society he so wanted to be a part of.

That somebody else was, when Aly met her, another man's wife, Mrs Thomas Loel E. B. Guinness, Joan to friends. She was twenty-six, tall, elegant, very English-looking and very well connected in English society. Her father was Lord Churston, former ADC to the Viceroy of India. Her mother had been one of the original Gaiety Girls. Before her marriage, Joan had been famous as one of the Yarde-Buller girls and she had married young and well. At nineteen she had married Loel Guinness, one of the merchant banking family, related to the Anglo-Irish brewing family and a Tory Member of Parliament for Bath. In 1932, they had a son called Patrick. Guinness could not be with his wife all the time and she spent much of the summer of 1934 in Deauville, alone. Alone, that is, until the fateful dinner party when she found herself sitting next to Aly. The story goes that she looked reserved, English and haughty — and Aly ignored her. Then,

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suddenly, using a momentary lull in the conversation, Aly is said to have turned to her and asked loudly, 'Darling, will you marry me?'

Maybe like all good stories, this one is apocryphal, but it illustrates Aly's reputation and the nature of his relationship with Joan. It progressed smoothly, in and out of casinos, in and out of villas. Loel Guinness suspected nothing; in January 1935 he went to Australia on business, and arranged for Joan to spend a holiday in Switzerland with friends. He returned to find that his wife had gone to South America. In April of that year, as Guinness later told a London court, he confronted his wife in her mother's house. She confessed that she 'had formed an attachment' for Aly Khan and wanted a divorce. Divorce in those days was more complicated than it is now, adultery had to be proved, and between 17th April and 20th April 1935, Guinness told the court, Joan Guinness and Aly Khan had shared a Paris hotel suite. In June, Guinness filed for a divorce, naming Aly as co-respondent. The case was finally heard in November. Joan did not defend herself, and an affidavit sent by her attorneys from Paris was read out to the court. Guinness was granted a decree nisi which, by law, became absolute in six months. He also won custody of Patrick, and Aly was required to pay the costs.

A week later, on 18th May 1936, refreshed from a holiday in Nassau, Aly and Joan were married in Paris. A wedding photograph captured the moment well, the Aga bursting out of his somewhat ill-kept suit, his pate glistening, and next to him Aly, looking like a Parisian executive. He was holding the hand of young Sadruddin, all dolled up in embroidered children's clothes, whose other hand was being held by Joan Aly Khan who was wearing a large hat obscuring the slender body. Next to her stood Andrée Carron, seemingly wanting to hold back instincts to hug everybody and anybody in sight.

The bride wore black, the groom had a white gardenia in his buttonhole. The ceremonies were held in the Town Hall of the 16th Arrondissement in Paris. On the orders of Aly, only the couple's relations attended. The Mayor, M Chatente, spoke glowingly of the bride and bridegroom's generosity to the poor to mark the event. The ceremony was followed by a more colourful Muslim ceremony at the Paris Mosque where in the glittering Hall of Prayers, the wedding party sat on priceless carpets and got married again — according to Muslim rights.

For Joan, life could not have been more different than the one she had led so far. (See illustration, page 236.) A French mother-in-law, and a husband whose taste and values she did not share. Clearly, she was fascinated by Aly, but what did Aly see in her? Joan undoubtedly provided Aly with an entrée into English society, but more than that, Aly probably valued her calmness and her reassurance in a world that always seemed to be rather turbulent to him. One friend who knew them both quite well suggested Aly was quite attracted by the nanny-like quality in Joan. He would have his flings, his escapades, and his affairs, but in the end he would come back to Joan; safe and secure and always ready to forgive him for his misdemeanours.

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At the wedding it had been announced that Joan and Aly would go to India for a second Muslim ceremony. It soon became evident that this was not possible. Joan was pregnant and, less than seven months after the wedding, on 17th December 1936, she gave birth to a son. Three days before this, the Aga had heard of the abdication of Edward VIII. During the abdication crisis, the Aga's name had been mentioned as a possible adviser. As the King wrestled with his dilemma, Wallis Simpson fled to France and tried to ring him from Evreux, suggesting that the King should consult Lord Derby, Winston Churchill and the Aga Khan. But the connection was bad and while Wallis shouted into the phone, the King heard nothing. The Aga genuinely liked Edward VIII and was sorry to see him go. But he had little time to dwell on these public affairs, because the birth of Aly's son had to be celebrated. The Aga arrived at Joan's bedside to find that his grandson had already acquired a name, Karim. The Aga did not much care for the name, but Joan insisted. She wanted something that sounded beautiful in any language and was not too difficult for Europeans to pronounce. She had her way.

Early in 1937, Joan, Karim and Doris Lyon, a state-registered nurse who had come to stay with Joan just before the birth, moved to Aly's house in Maisons-Laffitte, on the periphery of Paris. Here, Joan presided over a household from which Aly was often absent — either racing horses or cars — and here the contrast between being a wife to an English MP and to the son of an Eastern religious leader would soon become evident. Karim was just a month old when Joan, Aly, Sadruddin, the Aga and his wife, went off to attend the golden jubilee celebrations in East Africa. The Aga's Khoja followers there wanted to match, if not exceed, devotions shown by the followers in Bombay just under a year ago. They were determined not to be outdone.

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Chapter 25

Worth his Weight in Gold

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The celebrations in Bombay a year earlier — in 1936 — had shown that the India Office suspicions about the motives of the Aga Khan's jubilee were not groundless — at least as far as the timing went. To the Aga Khan's followers it was portrayed as a Durbar, a rich Indian word with distinct connotations of royalty. The celebrations were expertly timed to coincide with those held by the Maharaja of Baroda and the Nizam of Hyderabad. Though the Aga, as we have seen, was not an Indian Ruling Prince, the event as portrayed in the British press suggested that the three Indian jubilees were similar. *The Times* had a leader on the three Indian jubilees, and *The Daily Telegraph* combined its favourable appraisal of Baroda's enlightened rule with the Aga Khan's ability to bridge the gap between Europe and Asia as none other before him had done.

The only thing that marred the jubilee was George V's illness. George V died on 20th January 1936, a Monday. The Aga told his followers the celebrations should be limited to the necessary religious obligations, but by the time the King's death was broadcast through Bombay in an early edition of the *Evening News* of India it was Tuesday, and the Aga's real jubilee celebrations — the weighing in gold — had been completed the previous Sunday. Despite the shadow cast by George V's illness, the celebrations were colourful, and as the *Times of India* put it, 'a most impressive and brilliant affair.' A special Shamiana — a sort of open-air marquee — had been erected at Hasanabad, in congested inner-city Bombay, to accommodate the guests. Though large, it could not quite manage the 30,000 who were present that Sunday, ranging from the dignitaries in Bombay, the consuls-general of Persia, Iraq, Afghanistan and the high and low of the Khoja community in the city. At 11 a.m., the Aga, accompanied by his wife, arrived and was greeted by a tremendous ovation. There was almost a stampede as people rushed forward to try and get a glimpse of him, and particularly his French wife, who looked glittering in a light green sari. The Aga's mother, Lady Ali Shah, had already arrived and was seated on the dais.

The Aga wanted the celebrations to approximate as closely to a royal celebration as possible, and Khoja volunteers had prepared a guard of honour for the Aga to inspect. Dressed in a purple robe with his decorations

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and insignia prominently displayed, and sporting a green turban, the Aga tried to look his military best as he inspected the volunteers. He spoke to the crowd, referring to George V's illness and praying for his speedy recovery. Such was the noise, the commotion and the constant hub-bub that surrounded the Shamiana that, despite the loudspeakers, few beyond the small circle could hear what the Aga said. Every now and again the crowds broke into cheers, and the Aga rose from his seat to accept their greetings. Then came the moment the crowd had been waiting for.

Specially erected gilded weighing scales had been placed in the centre of the Shamiana. The Aga took off his turban, a special cushion was placed on one side of the scales, and the Aga successfully manoeuvred his large frame onto the seat, tilting the scales alarmingly. Gold was being steadily poured onto the other side and soon the scales were equal: the Aga was worth 9,500 ounces of gold, which had cost Rs 335,000 (£25,135). When this was announced, the audience cheered enthusiastically. The crowds had been so enthusiastic, the police had had to intervene to maintain order and one policeman was injured in the stampede that had developed outside the main entrance to the Shamiana.

Though George V's condition had curtailed some of the celebrations, throughout the day the Khojas continued to rejoice. Twelve thousand women followers of the Aga Khan were entertained to tea on Sunday evening by the Golden Jubilee Committee and that night several areas in Bombay were illuminated. Much of the illuminations were in the areas of the city where the Khojas lived, particularly Mazagoan where the Durbar had been held and round the Jamat Khana in Bhendy Bazaar. But houses in the posh areas on Walkeshwar Road and Napean Sea Road, where the Aga's rich followers lived, were also illuminated. Two specially illuminated tramcars ran along Parel Road — one of the busiest roads in a congested area of Bombay, and the Aga and his wife motored round the illuminated localities with large crowds following after them, thronging at every street corner. For the Aga, it was a joyous occasion and it did much to restore his morale after Hoare's refusal to grant him territory. A year later it was the turn of East Africa.

The Aga arrived in Kenya on 13th January 1937 to start his jubilee preparations in East Africa. His followers had not seen him for eleven years, and they welcomed him with relief and joy. The Aga made Nairobi his headquarters for a quick tour of East Africa. From Kenya he went to Madagascar and from there to Tanganyika. These journeys were all part of his jubilee celebrations though the main event, the gold weighing ceremony, came in Nairobi in early March. On 17th February, the Aga and his wife arrived back from Tanganyika to be greeted at the airport by a large Indian crowd and the Mayor and Mayoress of Nairobi. Two weeks later, all of Nairobi seemed to have gathered to see the Aga weighed in gold.

As in Bombay, Khojas of Nairobi had erected a special open-air marquee, in the grounds of the Aga Khan's club, which accommodated about 12,000 people. The marquee was decked with flags and lights and in the centre was the green, yellow and red canopied platform. The weighing

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was to be conducted on the platform, but at some distance from it mats were spread on the ground to provide seating for thousands of the Aga's followers. On the central platform there were chairs for the more distinguished guests, including the acting Governor, Mr Wade, heads of departments, Lord Francis Scott, elected members of the legislative council and the Mayor, Mr T. A. Wood. The Aga now wore a gold turban and an unadorned red ankle-length coat, and his wife was dressed in a very rich white and gold sari, proudly showing the Aga's red and green racing colours. The Aga was presented with an address of welcome by the All-Africa Golden Jubilee Celebrations Committee — an address that thanked the Aga for helping the Khojas establish a 'de facto Government of our own in this colony.' Gold was associated with the address as well, for it was presented in a magnificent gold and ebony casket, supported on four ivory elephants, the work of craftsmen in Zanzibar.

We do not know what the scales were like, but presumably they too were embellished with gold. This time the weighing was in the hands of the acting Governor. While the Aga sat on one side of the scale, Mr Wade placed ingots of gold on the other side, till the scales were balanced. It took 3,200 ounces of gold ingots, worth £22,773, to balance the Aga's considerable weight. As the weighing was complete, the Aga slowly swivelled round on the scales and waved to the audience amidst a burst of applause. He accepted the gold with much joy and pleasure, thanked his followers and hoped that during the next five or six years, the whole amount with its increment, would be devoted to the benefit of his spiritual children in Africa. As in Bombay, he named leading Ismailis, who would form a managing committee which, under his direction, would spend this money for overseas scholarships, nursery schools for child welfare and dispensaries. It had been another successful semi-regal operation, and the following day the Aga, feeling very satisfied, left on safari for the Serengetti Plains, to rest and photograph lions. His safari was just as successful as the weighing ceremony. The Aga took the photographs, and Andrée Carron shot a fine lion. Just before they left Nairobi, Andrée Carron bought a twenty-five-acre plot in Nugong, suburb of Nairobi, where she intended to build a house in which the Aga could get some peace and rest.

The Bombay jubilee celebrations were meant to nudge the British towards granting him some territories. The Kenya celebration was meant to impress the other Indian communities with the prestige and importance of the Aga Khan. Nobody could doubt where he stood in the eyes of the British. Just before he left Nairobi, the Aga congratulated the British Government on

> the remarkable improvement in the condition of the natives in the last decade. There is no doubt that the conscience of Great Britain, as trustee in the mandated territory of Tanganyika and in Kenya, can rest serene, and even be satisfied if all the acts, so obvious to the returned traveller, were known in the Mother Country. Perhaps some day Great Britain will make a large cheap loan for the further development of Tanganyika and Kenya.

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The visit ended in mutual self-congratulations. *The Times* reported that 'during the Aga Khan's visit one of the most noticeable features has been the mixing of Europeans and Asiatics at social functions.'

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Chapter 26

Glory by Lake Geneva

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In February 1931, the Aga had been appointed a delegate to the Disarmament Conference that was held in Geneva. It seems to have been one of the few British Government appointments which landed, uninvited, on the Aga's desk — or, if the Aga actually angled for such an appointment, no records of it were kept. Ever since the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, the British had been promoting India as an international entity. This was absurd, a bit like the five votes that the Soviet Union has at the United Nations, including representation for Ukraine and Belorussia. The Soviets probably got their post-war ideas from the pre-war British for whom a separate Indian seat at these international gatherings meant more votes for the British Empire — there were also separate seats for the various dominions — and more jobs for the boys. In 1932, along with the Aga, India was represented by those two well-known 'Indians', Sir Samuel Hoare and Sir Henry Wheeler. The disarmament negotiations, in any case, amounted to nothing but the Aga saw no contradiction in making a long speech on the general principles on world disarmament, then returning to London and joining in calls for the strengthening of the British Navy.

Though Geneva was an old stamping ground, his official position in Geneva meant much to the Aga and, particularly, to Andrée. Even if the Aga rarely took Andrée along when he went socializing in London; in Geneva, in the mid-thirties, the Aga and Andrée — happier in the French atmosphere — fashioned a harmonious social style. Andrée may not have had the artistic pretensions of Theresa and she was, as the Aga told Colonel Patterson, rather bourgeois and home loving. But her marriage to the Aga was a secured reality, not ephemeral fiction as Theresa's. Andrée felt secure enough to wink at the Aga's none too secret involvement with other women. They seemed to be mostly golf caddies in the South of France. Though, as we have seen, the Aga was not a very good golfer he took it seriously and tried to play every day — and he invariably preferred to be caddied by a female, the younger the better. In Aix-les-Bains, the custom developed of the Aga holding an annual competition for the 'cadettes'. He would line them up in a row, inspect them personally, and present the winner with a cup — and a kiss. Andrée pretended not to notice, happy to win public acceptance as the Aga's wife.

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The Aga liked international conferences, the disarmament negotiations had helped him make friends with Liddell Hart, and his appetite for Geneva's international community had long been whetted by Diana and Duff Cooper. In 1928 Duff Cooper had been a delegate to the League of Nations; the Aga had often listened to Diana Cooper talking of the League's 'inspiring and diverting' experience. Diana, who had followed Duff to Geneva, had fallen hopelessly in love with both Geneva's traditions of exile and romance and the League's inspiration of idealism. The pictures she painted made the Aga all the more restless to become a delegate himself.

In 1934 the Aga was appointed a delegate to the League of Nations. By the time he arrived, the League was shorn of much of its idealism and was rather prosaic. In any case, he distrusted fine-sounding phrases and resolutions which the League had passed in its early years. He was so alarmed by the League's condemnation of Japan for its aggression against China, he even pressed the Marquis of Londonderry to raise the matter in the British Cabinet and suggest a revision of policy. Japan, the Aga reasoned, was too valuable a commercial friend to be antagonized, while the Chinese were irretrievably lost to revolution and anarchy. What excited the Aga was the positions he could win for himself at the League of Nations.

In one of the very first sessions he attended at the League, in 1934, the Aga was elected Vice-President; his contacts with the delegates convinced him that if he were re-nominated the next year, he would stand a good chance of succeeding the President. Unfortunately, this coincided with the Italo-Abyssinian war and it was felt that the President should not be from a country so closely associated with Great Britain. By the time the crisis blew over, in the autumn of 1936, the Aga's term had ended. The two Geneva appointments, in 1932 and 1934, had come as unexpected gifts — almost as if the India Office wanted to reward the Aga for being, as he would put it himself, 'the only Indian leading a party co-operating with the British Government,' in the crucial years of the Round Table Conference and the reforms that followed. Now the Aga decided it was time to ask for a gift.

On 19th October 1936, writing from the Ritz Hotel in London, the Aga begged Lord Linlithgow, then Viceroy in India, to nominate him again to the League of Nations and suggest to the Foreign Office that he should be supported for the Presidency. He was ready for it, his wife was ready for it — socially speaking — and he felt that this was the least that could be done for India which for the last eighteen years had regularly paid its dues to the League — and they had had very few 'jobs for the boys' in return.

Linlithgow, Zetland and Anthony Eden, who had succeeded Hoare as Foreign Secretary, were quite keen, to quote Eden, 'to see the Aga Khan's ambitions gratified.' The problem was that the Aga wanted to preside over the special session that was to be held to admit Egypt to the League. His reasoning was that if he was President of a special session, then he would bound to be elected President of the full annual assembly — and he wanted to make doubly sure. India Office officials, like Mr Tompkins, thought the Aga's request part of the rather pathetic, but quite common, desire among

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some Indians to acquire as many high ranks and top jobs as were going. The Foreign Office were more concerned about what the Egyptians might make of the Aga presiding over a special session being held for their benefit. They turned to Sir Miles Lampson in Cairo.

As luck would have it, the Aga was a guest of Sir Miles. On 5th January 1937 Sir Miles telegraphed London:

> I strongly deprecate the suggestion, which I am sure would be a mistake from the Egyptian point of view. The Aga Khan is at present here and my relations with him are excellent. I request, therefore, that the above expression of opinion be kept strictly confidential.

In March 1937, Linlithgow informed the Aga that he would be the senior representative of India at the special Egyptian session but failed to inform him that the Foreign Office was considering putting him up for the Presidency for the full session that would follow later in the year. The Aga was anguished. On 29th March 1937, he wrote a long impassioned letter to Zetland from Villa Jane-Andrée at Cap d'Antibes. He was so carried away by his supposed historical connections with Egypt that he claimed that every Egyptian 'would look upon it as a special compliment' if he presided over the session. The Aga's letter merely meant more work for Sir Miles Lampson. When he had dismissed the Aga's case, back in December, the Foreign Office enquired, was he actually reflecting Egyptian Government views? On 6th April 1937, Sir Miles patiently telegraphed that much as he, and others, liked the Aga, as a political or religious leader he was 'not taken very seriously by the Muslims in the Near East.' In any case, on this of all days, Egypt would much prefer to become a member of the League while a European presided over it — reflecting the sort of inferiority complex that all colonial countries have.

The Foreign Office was eventually able to soothe the Aga, with Anthony Eden promising that the Aga ought to be proposed for the presidency of the full session in 1937. There was only one snag; the Norwegian delegation. Mr Hambro, the leader of the Norwegian delegation didn't much care for the Aga's life style, particularly his attachment to racing. In 1935, as Bahram had won the Derby, the Aga had been called away from a meeting of the League of Nations to be told the joyous news. And when Mr Hambro visited London in July 1936, he made his objections fairly well known. But after a certain amount of Foreign Office arm twisting, the Norwegians relented. With the full weight of the British Empire behind him, the Aga was unanimously elected President of the 1937 ordinary session.

If the Aga had hoped for a quiet session as President — or as he had put it in his letter to Linlithgow, 'purely constitutional and legal rather than acutely political' — 1937 was another tumultuous year for the League. It was marked by the Spanish Civil War and Japan's continuing aggression in China. Though he and Andrée had enjoyed the socializing, by the end of it the Aga was deeply pessimistic about the League's future, convinced that the day would come when it would be no more than a gathering of Great

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Britain, France and Russia. In many ways his views of the world had not been changed by his Presidency of the League — it had only been further confirmed. In October 1936, in his letter to Linlithgow begging him for the Presidency, the Aga had presented the spectre of the Russians at the League of Nations feast. The Aga distrusted Stalin's 'socialism in one country' policy and believed that Russia was still after a world Russian leadership through world revolution. Russia, the Aga told Linlithgow, would encourage general war, and after the war, take advantage of the exhaustion to build up a series of Soviet socialist republics in Europe and Asia, particularly in China and India. The only solution was for Britain, France and Germany to ensure they never got into conflict with each other and isolate the Russians.

On 20th July 1937 the Aga, who had just returned from the summer session of the League, wrote an almost identical letter to Linlithgow — but one even more pessimistic. He (the Aga) thought that Russia and France were working hard to entangle Britain in a war with Germany over some purely Eastern Central European questions, 'in which we have no direct interest.' This, the Aga argued, was a Russian plot to get Britain and France to fight Germany and Japan, and benefit Russian imperialism. What was worse, a war like this would be disastrous for India, both economically and psychologically:

> The example of highly civilised nations killing and abusing each other would finally ruin that moral prestige that Western civilisation still has in the East and generally would lead to further encouragement of communism and unrest among the masses.

Despite the bleakness, social comings and goings had made life for the President acceptable with the sort of parties the Aga loved. It neatly complemented his established reputation as a great man of the English Turf and the special correspondent of *The Yorkshire Post*, in an article on 16th September 1937, tried to capture this unique blend of the man who could stroll across the paddock at Doncaster one day and the next preside over a League of Nations meeting at Geneva:

> Present writer has had the honour of four conversations with His Highness. Not a horse was ever mentioned, save the usual complimentary hope that his entry would win the St Leger. The talk drifted into Eastern politics. His Highness in his soft and silky voice; his accent, if it be detected all, is Persian. Though he reads the Koran in Arabic, his speech has none of the harsh guttural sounds of the desert tongue in which Mohammed enshrined his faith. It used to be said of Gladstone that he could talk with authority and weight on any subject under the sun. So can the Aga Khan. His knowledge is encyclopaedic, and when, in the course of his talks, he quotes a Persian quatrain or an Arabic couplet, you sense the Orient and realise you are in the presence of an Eastern scholar.

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After this eulogy, retirement was the only sensible course.

He had just one other task as President of the League to perform — to meet Adolf Hitler. Once he had done that, in the autumn of 1937, he, with a certain appropriateness and graciousness, returned to the Ritz Hotel and wrote to Linlithgow, resigning from the Indian delegation. He had been a delegate for five years and it was time someone younger was given a chance.

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Chapter 27

Citizen of the World

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1935 and 1936 were the golden years of the Aga's racing career. The Aga was already a prominent owner, and ever since he had taken up racing properly in 1921, his horses had been making their mark on the racecourse, and he himself created a distinctive racing persona. The Aga, in his glistening top hat, his laughing eyes behind his horn-rimmed spectacles, his face lit up with a beaming smile and one arm leading a victorious horse in — while the other carried a rolled umbrella — had already become a much-loved British sporting character. To this was added the necessary romantic hue when, in 1930, Harry Wragg rode Blenheim to victory in that year's Derby. Blenheim had started the race at 18-1, was widely considered the Aga's second-string horse and, so the story went, as Blenheim was streaking past the post, the Aga was urging his favourite Rustom Pasha. In 1935 the Aga had gone one better. Bahram had become the first horse since Rock Sand, thirty-two years ago, to win the triple crown; the 2,000 Guineas, the Derby and the St Leger. The Aga would often refer to 1935 as Bahram's year, and dine out on stories of how he had been summoned from a League of Nations' meeting discussing Mussolini's attack on Abyssinia, to be told of Bahram's win in the St Leger.

But 1936 had not begun very promisingly. The Aga's great hope was Mahmoud, grandson of Mumtaz Mahal. The season had started badly for Mahmoud and, in the 2,000 Guineas, a fortnight before the Derby, he had come second to Pay Up, owned by the Aga's friend Lord Astor. Mahmoud was a grey and racing prejudice had it that greys never did well in the Derby and even Frank Butters, the Aga's trainer, preferred Taj Akbar. But Charlie Smirke, Mahmoud's jockey, had full faith in him and piloted the horse so successfully that he won the Derby in a record time of 2 minutes, 33.8 seconds — a record that stands to this day.

The Aga's joy seemed complete: Taj Akbar came second, and with shouts of 'good old Aga' ringing in his ears, he led in Mahmoud. But all this turned to dust when, within weeks of this victory, the racing world learned that the Aga had sold his 1930 Derby winner Blenheim to an American syndicate for £45,000. English racing was even more parochial and nationalistic than it is today and the thought of an English Derby winner — and a record one at that — helping to breed American winners, quite shocked the racing world.

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Almost thirty years later the trainer Marcus Marsh provided an explanation for the Aga's action in his autobiography *Racing With The Gods*. The Aga, Marsh said, was convinced that Germany would conquer Europe, that England was doomed and that America would be his only refuge.

If this is indeed true, then it is extraordinary. Almost everything the Aga was doing and saying to friends and political contacts at this time, completely contradicted any such sentiments. Nine months before he sold Blenheim to the American syndicate, he had written to Lord Zetland from Geneva, yet another hosanna on Britain's moral leadership. This, he told Zetland on 21st October 1935, was so universally recognized, and her prestige so high, that there was a 'new hope in the world, at last something other than force may have the last word to say in world affairs.' America had never much figured in the Aga's political calculations — except as a place to make money — and, far from believing that Germany would conquer Europe, he was actively working for an Anglo-German alliance. Blenheim's sale and his subsequent controversial horse sales in the years to come, were motivated by the simple fact that the Aga saw horses as an investment. He liked winning, but to him preserving British blood lines meant nothing — more important was what he could make from horses. In any event, for the Aga Europe was the centre of the world and he was working hard to prevent war.

The Aga had been thinking of a Germany policy for some time. Part of this was a natural reflection of his interest in the country. As he told his friends, he had been a student of German politics since the fall of Bismark. But his interest in Germany, particularly Hitler's Germany, was coloured by the very London society he dominated. In 1933-35, as Richard Griffiths has pointed out, two of London's greatest hostesses, Emerald Cunard and Ronnie Greville, were enamoured of Nazism. The Aga was a frequent guest at their parties and though the talk may have been silly hostess stuff, they did, as Harold Nicolson would angrily record, immense harm. 'These people have a subversive influence. They dine and wine our younger politicians and they create an atmosphere of authority and responsibility and grandeur, whereas the whole thing is a mere flatulence of the spirit.'

There was also Lord Lothian. Lothian was at the centre of the Anglo-German group that had been set up under the influence of Dr Margarete Gärtner in 1933. The Aga had known Lothian since the Paris peace negotiations of 1919, and these two men, very different yet similar, had kept in touch and developed a good relationship. Lothian had been part of what was called Lord Milner's kindergarten, believers in the imperial connection, and though the Aga had publicly criticized Milner's 'credo' this had not affected their friendship with Lothian.

Lothian had also been a member of the Liberal delegation to the first Round Table Conference, Under-Secretary of State for India in the MacDonald national government from 1931-32 and had become something of an India buff. Baldwin described him as a 'rum cove' who would be 'thoroughly useless in the Cabinet' on India 'but useful outside'. Most people agreed with the portrayal by Tom Jones, the legendary Whitehall

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mandarin of those days, of Lothian as a man of 'ability, intelligence, unstable judgement ... apt to be the victim of his most recent experience.' Lothian's guiding principle was his Christian Science faith — he was a convert from Roman Catholicism — which made him take a high moral line on politics. This could not have been more different from the Aga's *real-politik* view of international relations, but as the Aga sought to play a role in European politics Lothian proved a very useful conduit for ideas and opinions.

In June 1936 the Aga had dined with Lothian at a party given by Mrs Wigram in London. During the dinner the two men had discussed Germany, the growing crisis in the Rhineland and, soon after returning to the Ritz, the Aga had sat down and written a long memorandum on the subject to Lothian. This in the main followed the appeasement line with a distinctive Aga twist developing what may be called the 'good Germany, bad Italian' thesis. His ideas, which were to be repeated to Lord Linlithgow, Viceroy in India, a couple of months later, were that Germany and Britain were natural allies. Germany had no land frontier with Britain. Therefore, how could she expand at the expense of Britain or her Empire? The First World War rivalry with Germany was a naval one, the naval agreement signed between Germany and Britain, due to 'Hitler's wisdom' which had removed the possibility of such a conflict.

> This [argued the Aga] is the best of all possible guarantees as there is no foundation for the fear that Germany would like to expand at the cost of Great Britain. On the other hand, it proved that Hitler has seen that his country's true interests lie in union with other sections of the German race and such cooperation with Britain as will make world-wide trade under peaceful conditions possible.

The Aga accepted that playing Hitler's game meant that different parts of Germany would have to be reunited. But for the Aga it was not only natural but desirable. To deny this to her would be to continue the vindictive spirit of the Versailles Treaty at a time when Hitler's naval agreement showed how ready he was to cooperate. Also it would distract from the real danger to the Empire which was Italy. After Abyssinia, she would go after Yemen and 'not only Egypt, but India and Cape of Good Hope itself will be at the mercy of Italy.'

The Aga was equally certain that Germany would not want all her former colonies restored, and Germany's economic needs could be met by 'a great many financiers in this country.' His final clinching argument, as told to Linlithgow, was that none of the loyal Indian elements could understand why Great Britain should be working on a conflict with Germany, which could only benefit Russia. It was well known that the Russians were trying to undermine the imperial connection, and provoking a European war to expand her Empire. 'The only people in India who approve of the present tendency to cooperate with Russia and the European allies of Russia against Germany's position in Europe on the continent are Nehru [Jawarahalal]

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and his friends, whose only hope is to profit by the catastrophe of an Anglo-German war.'

The Aga's antipathy to Russia was well-known and understandable but his Italian paranoia may appear strange — at a time when appeasers did not distinguish between Hitler and Mussolini. Mussolini's attack on Abyssinia in 1935 which had once deprived the Aga of the chance of becoming President of the League of Nations may have played a part. But the Aga's thesis was also owed to the fact that Mussolini had set himself up as Islam's protector, which not only usurped Britain's role as protector of Islam — but was a threat to his own position as the spokesman of the Muslim world.

His year as President of the League did little to reassure the Aga about his Italian fears. In May 1937 in the course of a lunch at the Persian Embassy in London, the Aga confided to Anthony Eden his fears about Italian intrigue in Yemen. The Aga advised Eden that the Foreign Office should watch very carefully for Italy 'was intriguing ceaselessly in that country.' The Foreign Office were aware that the Italians were up to some mischief in Yemen, though the situation, they felt, was more dangerous because of the internal politics of Yemen rather than any external intrigue.

By July 1937, having just completed the summer session of the League, the Aga was deeply fearful of what a war in Europe might mean. On 20th July, writing to Linlithgow from the Ritz, he felt sure this would lead to Italian supremacy in the Near East and the Red Sea, almost as great a dominance as Italy exercises at present in the Central Mediterranean. This made it necessary, he warned Linlithgow and Lord Zetland, not to promise to help the French in any circumstances should they be attacked by Germany. This would only encourage the French to join Russia in insisting on 'what had been the doctrine of collective security — a doctrine that had been invented by Russia to entangle us with Germany and Japan for the benefit of Russia and which France, as the ally of Russia, supports.' And if a Russian-French trap, as the Aga saw it, produced a war in Europe then it would have damaging effects in Asia. For the Aga, a strong Europe was central to his vision of Islam. About this time he broadcast a message to the Muslim world in a voice that was a mixture of heaviness laced with a certain softness and Indianness on certain words. A broadcast to the Muslim world was unexceptional; the really interesting point was the Aga's plea to the Muslims to follow the example of Japan and borrow from the West. Islam, the Aga said, was at a turning point, its glorious early period was over, it must decide to go forward or 'be added to the other might-have-beens of history.' if it had to go forward then the vast number of Muslims who lived under European and other non-Muslim rule had to show the way:

> Now where we are living under foreign rule, we can immediately by imitating the West as the Japanese have done but also by keeping to our own spiritual and our highest intellectual character just as the Japanese have done, learn directly from the races that rule us those secrets of social and intellectual power which have made Europe so strong and so

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progressive ... with that we can carry out reforms, carry out political and economic development and above all scientific and cultural development which will place us on the same level as the European races.

At this time a good many Asians were much taken by the Japanese idea of copying Western products in order to develop an industrial base. The Aga had always been impressed with Japan but even after the Japanese had begun their aggression against China his faith and belief in Japan did not dwindle. The Chinese he did not much care for and was convinced the Chinese would go Communist under Russian influence. Japan mattered; he often urged British statesmen not to be sentimental about the Sino-Japanese clash and remember that friendship with Japan was important for Britain's Far Eastern Empire. Though he said little publicly on the question, privately he did not share the general Asian anguish about Japan's imperialist designs and, it is interesting that in his *Memoirs* when dealing with the League of Nations' efforts to resolve the Sino-Japanese troubles he takes pains not to denounce the Japanese for their pre-Second World War China policies.

That the Aga should have worshipped at the gate of force and strength is not surprising. He considered himself to be a pragmatist, a student of the European school of Metternich and Bismark, believer in *real-politik*.

On 13th October 1937 the Aga, accompanied by Andrée, arrived in Berlin. It was a visit he had been planning for some time though even now he was not sure he would meet Hitler or any of the top Nazis. The only meeting he had managed to fix in advance was with Doctor Goebbels and, publicly, the Aga's main interest was to meet certain German generals for a book he planned to write about the first four weeks of the First World War. After his arrival, the Aga met Walter Hewel, an official in Joachim Ribbentrop's Foreign Office. Hewel was one of the chosen few who had been imprisoned with Hitler after the Munich putsch of 1923 and the Aga requested Hewel to arrange meetings with Hitler, Goering and Reichsbank President Schacht. While the German generals were not too keen to meet the Aga, Ludendorff in particular, Hewel was able to arrange meetings with Hitler and Goering. The Aga and his wife met them on 20th October 1937 — first Goering, then Hitler.

A few days before this, the Aga had been given a reception by Indians in Germany, a dwindling mass who felt persecuted by the quite unashamed racism whipped up in Nazi papers like the *Völkischer Beobachter*. At the meetings the Indians had requested the Aga to intercede with Hitler, but when the Aga met Hitler he felt that this was too parochial a concern. He was more interested in establishing what Hitler's overall political designs were. What, he asked Hitler, were Germany's minimum demands in Europe? The Aga's argument was that Hitler should 'put forward — as immediately as possible — all her (Germany's) desires and demands which could be then understood and dealt with as a whole.' To make piecemeal claims was not in the realms of practical politics.

This provided Hitler with the opportunity to play the moderate German

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leader: work by peaceful means for full economic cultural and commercial union with Austria, to see a friendly government come into being in Austria, to ensure that German minorities in Czechoslovakia should have full autonomy such as Ireland enjoyed. But if such demands were met, asked the Aga, would Germany return to the League of Nations, accept the doctrine of collective security?

The Aga later recorded Hitler's response:

> Herr Hitler, with great insistence (and, I felt, sincerity) looking me straight in the eyes, said 'Yes' Germany would enter into any international system brought about for peace including the League in Geneva and all its articles and covenants, going as far as any other country in the system of general security.

Hitler, who would tailor his conversation to suit his guests, was more interested in impressing the Aga with his case for restoring pre-First World War German colonies. Hitler wanted the former German colonies in South West Africa, the Cameroons and Togoland returned. The Aga was immensely reassured to learn that on Tanganyika — where a great many Khojas lived — Hitler was prepared to make a compromise provided similar territory was given to Germany as a mandate on the West Coast of Africa. The Aga saw this as a historic concession by Hitler, and made much of this in the Memorandum about the talks that he wrote for Anthony Eden. But, twenty years later, when he came to write his *Memoirs*, he strenuously denied that he had ever discussed politics with Hitler and claimed that their conversation was all about horses and motor cars — Hitler offering to swop his new German cars for the Aga's horses.

Later, Hitler invited the Aga and his wife to tea. Hitler having played the colonial statesman with the Aga, now played the social charmer. And with Andrée Carron looking beautiful and chic, Hitler turned on all his powerful social charm. Andrée was quite overwhelmed. Some time later when 'Chips' Channon asked her who was the most attractive man she had ever met, she replied 'Heetlaire'. As Channon noted in his diary, Hitler 'obviously succeeded completely in demolishing her French prejudices.'

The Aga now saw his role in international affairs as trying to demolish prejudices about this new Germany. Immediately after he had returned to his hotel from the Hitler tea, he wrote out his long Memorandum on the talks for Anthony Eden and Lord Linlithgow. Initially, London was taken by the idea that Lord Halifax, who was due to visit the Hunting Exhibition in Berlin, should take the Aga's memorandum as the starting point for his conversation with Hitler. But in the end the Foreign Office decided that Hitler had been indulging in a 'little colonial propaganda' with the Aga and it would be dangerous to take the talks as a starting point for any discussion. Anthony Eden, however, was keen to work out a Foreign Office line on Hitler. He was getting impatient with the do-nothing policies of his officials and, pressed by Eden, Halifax did take to his meeting with Hitler some of ideas that the Aga had reported. Even without the Aga's

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Memorandum, Halifax might have said what he did — British sympathy with German grievances on Danzig, Austria, Czechoslovakia — but the Aga's Memorandum probably helped to contribute to the atmosphere of the general policy of appeasement that had begun to emerge.

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The Aga's meeting with Hitler was undoubtedly the high point of his international career, nicely crowning his year as President of the League of Nations. Though, after that, he had no official role to play, he retained his freelance interest in European affairs until the outbreak of the Second World War and he exchanged letters and memoranda, principally with Lothian, suggesting ideas that he considered would make the world safe for peace.

In the winter the Aga resumed his normal Eastern travels, concentrating on his African jubilee. In February 1938 he arrived in Egypt. As ever, he was a guest of Sir Miles Lampson who, whatever his views on the political Aga, much enjoyed the social one. Just then, however, he was confronted with what one official would later call the Aga's pursuit 'of the Caliphate Grail'. Some fifteen years before the Aga had burnt his fingers in the pursuit of a Turkish Caliphate, but now an Egyptian one seemed more attractive. In early February the Aga met Sheikh el Maraghi, the fundamentalist Islamic religious leader and quickly supported his ideas of an Egyptian Caliphate. King Farouk had replaced King Fuad — an Egyptian ruler more to the Aga's liking — and the Aga agreed with Sheikh el Maraghi that there were good historical precedents for local rulers assuming the Caliphate's title. If Farouk did it, then other Muslim leaders like the Nizam of Hyderabad, or the Imam of Yemen or even Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia could follow. The Aga supported the Sheikh's Islamic examples with English parallels observing that there the King's title as Defender of the Faith was recorded in the coins. He was fairly sure that Turkey would not mind and he also gave the Sheikh to understand that the British would quite like the idea of a 'Caliphate of an Egyptian monarch who would be more or less under their wing.'

Why the Aga should have raised the Caliphate question in this fashion is not clear. But whatever his motives he succeeded in producing yet another storm — though very much more private than the Turkish one of 1923. Dr Aras, the Turkish Foreign Minister, was in Cairo then and dined with Sir Miles Lampson. He was eager to find out what exactly the Aga had said. Sir Miles, who thought the Sheikh was trying to become the power behind the throne of an Egyptian Caliph-King, was in a familiar predicament. He knew a little about the Caliphate question but all his experts told him that it was a dangerous issue — both theologically and politically. He advised London to try and play down any such Aga idea.

Sir Miles sent a copy of his London despatch to the British Embassy in Turkey and there it set bells ringing in the head of Sir Percy Loraine. A few weeks previously Loraine had met Dr Aras just before the Turk was due to visit Egypt and Aras had denounced the whole idea of reviving the

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Caliphate. At that time the subject had meant little to Sir Percy since he was not aware of what the Aga was up to. He had not even listened very carefully to Dr Aras but he could remember that Dr Aras had been very emphatic that Turkey could only be friendly with an Egypt that was modern, anxious to live at peace with his neighbour, secular and quite divorced from doctrinaire reaction of clerical obscurantism. Turkey would view the resuscitation of the Caliphate 'with annoyance and revulsion'.

Like Sir Miles, Percy Loraine had 'excellent personal relations with the Aga Khan which I would not wish to be disturbed.' But the Aga's Caliphate campaign 'alarmed' him, and he advised the Foreign Office to have nothing to do with it. The Foreign Office agreed that the Aga had not spoken 'very wisely', circulated Loraine's letter and warned the India Office about the Aga's plans, suggesting that if he should raise it with them, they should do everything possible to discourage him. Like Sir Miles Lampson and Sir Percy Loraine, the Government of India were perturbed about the Aga's revival of the Caliphate question. The passions of the Khailagate agitation of a decade ago had long since evaporated, and hardly any of the Indian Muslims appeared to miss the Caliph.

But despite all this the Aga's Caliphate fly kept buzzing about. On Wednesday 22nd June 1938, the Prime Minister was asked in the House of Commons, 'whether in view of our ancient friendship with Islam, the Government will help to settle the question of the succession to the Khalifate.' The usual non-committal reply that this was a Muslim religious question in which the Government never intervened was given — but the subject clearly embarrassed ministers. Only one official derived much satisfaction from the Aga's doing:

> I have enjoyed the 'pursuit of the Caliphate grail'. There must have been some misunderstanding between Sir Percy and Sir Balomydes; but it can be brushed up with the tea. As for the ubiquitous Aga Khan, six months ago he was dabbling in Austria; and now he pops up in the 'dim Arthuriad'. No wonder he keeps Angora [the Turkish capital] guessing.

By then, the Aga had resumed his Hitler trail. In February and March 1938, while the Aga was busy with the Caliphate question, events in Europe had moved quickly. Anthony Eden had resigned as Foreign Secretary, to be succeeded by Halifax and Chamberlain's appeasement policy had begun to take shape. In March 1938, German troops rode into Austria proclaiming *Anschluss* — the union of Austria and the new German Reich. Though *The Times*, still sympathetic to Germany, described it as 'the rape of Austria', and Lothian began to believe that war with totalitarian states might be inevitable, the Aga could not bring himself to believe that men of politics playing the political game should ever be unable to avoid war.

He prepared another confidential Memorandum on Anglo-German relations and sent it to Lothian in the hope that if he thought it proper he could pass it on to Geoffrey Dawson, editor of *The Times*, Garvin, editor of *The Observer*, Astor or other friends. The memorandum itself has not been

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preserved but from Lothian's reply it would appear that the Aga suggested the reactivation of the seven great powers, namely America, Japan, Russia, Germany, Italy, France and ourselves, with a sprinkling of small powers added.

Nor had Hitler's *Anschluss* done anything to dent the Aga's personal faith in the Führer. In May 1938 he had written in the *Anglo-German Review* why 'I consider Hitler is a pillar of peace.' And on 8th June 1938, attending a performance of *Rigoletto* at Covent Garden, Andrée had publicly confirmed what she had privately told 'Chips' Channon: that Hitler was a most attractive man.

Not surprisingly, Munich found the Aga cheering Chamberlain and his policies. Now he was prepared to shed even his previous anti-Italian feelings. In a letter to *The Times* from Paris on 2nd October 1938, he expressed 'universal gratitude' to Chamberlain's efforts to save 'the world from probably the worst catastrophe it has ever faced.' And he suggested that now may be a good time, 'to recognise without further delay the Italian acquisition of Ethiopia by accrediting H.M.'s ambassador in Rome to the King of Italy and Emperor of Ethiopia....'

Two weeks later *The Times* published the Aga's famous — or infamous — article in praise of Chamberlain:

> Peace prevails, thanks to the wisdom of the Prime Minister and those who loyally supported him in the Cabinet and country. What about the future....? The substance of German unity is now achieved. What is still outstanding? ... Poland? ... A 'live and let live' policy with the Poles, recognising the Corridor and the fact that over one million Germans would remain in Poland, has given Germany security in the East. She will not risk that security as the price of local conquest. Danzig will probably come under direct Reich administration, an amicable arrangement with Poland, and a similar accord probably awaits Memel. But it is inconceivable that such settlements could cause a world war.

The Aga could see no reason why Germany should attack France, 'What for? Alsace-Lorraine?' Nor would Germany try to take the Channel ports or acquire colonies by conquest. Hitler's demands for Lebensraum — greater living space — could be met by making Germany the workshop of the world. The Aga sketched out a charming vision of Herr Hitler living to be seventy-five in a Germany which would then be a nation of 100 million, but having extensive commercial and business intercourse with all the nations of the world and generating enough income to satisfy even this expanded population. For the Aga, a man of supreme practical politics, talk of smashing Nazism was 'too formal to be worthy of consideration by the people of this country ... we find no reason why the glorious victory for peace with honour won by the Prime Minister need degenerate into a truce. Reason, self-interest, conscience: all point to peace.'

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Hitler had often spoken in favour of peace, and the Aga urged the readers

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of *The Times* to take 'him at his word.' The fact that *The Times* gave the Aga such prominence and on such a topic (it was the first time the Aga had written on something not connected directly with India) indicates his position and the friendship established, through Lothian, with Geoffrey Dawson. *The Times* itself was in favour of Munich, and Chamberlain's supporters included many other notables besides the Aga. The very day that the Aga's article appeared in *The Times*, the Duke of Windsor, in a letter to Bruce Lockhart, expressed his relief that Munich had prevented another war. The article provoked controversy, particularly the Aga's suggestion that *Mein Kampf* was irrelevant. But, when correspondents challenged him — in an almost exact replay of events ten years earlier — the Aga pleaded lack of time. Writing from the Ritz Hotel in Paris he told *The Times* he was on his way 'by easy stages, to Egypt and India.' Ten years ago it had been old India hands left floundering in the Aga's wake, now it was experts in European politics. The Aga's only complaint was with friends who opposed Chamberlain. Duff Cooper resigned over Munich and the Aga just could not understand his action. 'Why, old boy, why?' he kept asking Duff Cooper — as Diana Cooper recalls.

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Chapter 28

The Search for an Aga State Part II

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In many ways the Aga's visit to India in the winter of 1938-39 was similar to the one made five years earlier in 1933-34. Then, he had come from London, a triumphant representative of British India at the Round Table Conferences and the political discussions which followed. Now he was returning to India after a year as President of the League of Nations, and an ambassador of peace — albeit self-appointed. But just as five years earlier the Aga had been haunted by private fears so it was on this trip. Then it was what the new India Act would do to his status and power in India, now it was fears of what the proposed Indian Income Tax Bill would do to his rights to collect money from his followers. Nothing had happened in the previous five years to 'regularize' the Aga's or Aly's interests in British India, and in the summer of 1938 the Aga had been quite disturbed by a couple of small — but revealing — instances which highlighted this.

The first was trivial indeed — a driving offence. On 18th April 1938 Aly, accompanied by a lady (we do not know if the lady was his wife) was being driven along Kennington Road, Lambeth, by his chauffeur, Emrys Williams, who unlike other Aly chauffeurs, quite liked to drive fast. That evening the police booked him for speeding but Williams, instructed by Aly, claimed immunity as chauffeur to a prince with the title of His Highness. Scotland Yard eventually learned from India Office that Aly's titles were honorary and did not prevent prosecution.

The second incident, later in the summer of 1938, was more public — and potentially more embarrassing. On 6th July 1938, the Londoner's Diary of the *Evening Standard* carried a little piece entitled 'Problems of a Title':

> The Stewards of the Jockey Club have instructed Messrs Weatherby, their publishers, to enquire of the India Office the correct designation of the eldest son of the Aga Khan, who is known as Prince Aly Khan.
>
> The enquiry follows a number of complaints which have been received from India. It has been the practice of Messrs Weatherby in their racing calendar to refer to Prince Aly Khan and he is so named in the racing programmes.

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The *Evening Standard* amusingly speculated as to what Aly Khan may be called. Should the example of *The Times* be followed? Should Aly Khan be called 'the Aly Khan', although the 'the' before the name suggested a head of state. 'Mr Aly Khan is a considerable descent in dignity. And Aly Khan Esquire is lacking in the picturesque. Perhaps plain Aly Khan is right.'

At the India Office, Patrick began to prepare for a visit by the Aga and Aly. As ever, his antennae about the Khans was sharp and he suggested that a letter be sent to India to find out how Aly had been addressed at the Viceregal Court. Patrick was right to anticipate. On 11th July both the Aga and Aly visited Patrick. They were very disturbed by the Londoner's Diary item about the proposed Jockey Club enquiry. The Aga was convinced it was the work of his old enemy, Ghulam from Sind. Aly had frequently been addressed in India as 'the Prince' and he could easily obtain a passport from Persia to prove the family's right to be so addressed. The Aga wanted the India Office to issue a suitable official notification. But when Patrick doubted whether the India Office could take any such position, the Aga pleaded for the personal intervention of Lord Zetland.

Though the India Office had heard nothing from the Jockey Club, Zetland did come to the Aga's rescue. In his private capacity he wrote to Messrs Weatherby and on 13th July, *The Times*, suitably coached, made the following announcement:

> In reference to the question which has arisen as to the proper title of the Aly Khan, the eldest son of the Aga Khan, it may be stated that the use of the courtesy title of Prince Aly Khan is recognised in official announcements and notifications in India.

It was just as the Aga was preparing to leave for India, that the India Office heard from the Viceroy as to how Aly Khan had been addressed there. During the Aga's Jubilee in India in 1936, and the small dinners and luncheon parties that had preceded and followed, Aly Khan and his wife had been addressed as 'Prince' and 'Princess'; India rather sheepishly confessed that they had no authority for the use of such titles.

To the Aga this could hardly be of much comfort. Just before he left for India, the Aga addressed yet another Memorial to the British. On 21st October 1938, he wrote a long, private letter to Linlithgow on the notepaper of the Ritz Hotel in London where he was then staying. As he had done with the previous Memorial five years earlier, he sent a copy to the Secretary of State for India — Lord Zetland. It was a familiar enough recitation of the Aga's lineage and the services with which he and his family had provided the British. But the meat of the Memorial was an old Aga claim, presented in a slightly different form. He no longer claimed territorial status, but he now wanted his title, his salutes and his status as a Ruling Chief to be made hereditary. Some years before Willingdon had seen it as a possible fallback position in trying to deflect the Aga from his claim to a state. Now the Aga had made the fallback position his own forward demand; one to which the Aga was morally entitled — and which would right an old wrong. Twenty-

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three years earlier in 1916, when the Government had granted him the status of a Ruling Chief of Bombay, it had been the Government's intention to give him all the immunities and privileges that went with that position — including tax exemption. 'But when the war was over my services were overlooked by the then political authorities, and other views were held.' He received the title, but not the immunity, making his title an 'empty one ... I felt, and have never ceased to feel, aggrieved that the anticipation I was warranted in forming did not materialise and thus the honour was a shadow with no substance behind it.'

The Aga accepted that he should have taken all this up in 1916 but then Aly was a young child and he was busy being the international statesman. Now that Aly was 'in young manhood', it was time matters were settled. If the title of Highness and status of Ruling Chief were not conferred on him, and Aly retained his Indian domicile, he might well find that in India there were Khoja disciples of his who ranked higher than the man supposed to be their spiritual head. 'This would,' the Aga wrote, 'be most regrettable, not only on my son's account, but also, I venture to think, far more in the public interest.'

In return for income tax exemption, the Aga was prepared to give as an annual contribution to Indian Defence expenditure the 'equivalent of my existing liability for as long as I remain in the reasonable approximation to my present resources. The essence of the matter is that this should be a free gift not an exactation.' The precedent had been created for the Aga, by making the title of the son and heir of the Nizam of Hyderabad hereditary. But if all this was not convincing, then, the letter concluded, the Aga would have no alternative but to think of withdrawing from India:

> While my son is following in my footsteps and has gained a warm attachment to India, there will be little, in the absence of such hereditary distinction, to lead him to maintain unimpaired this family's tradition of domicile. He might well feel that he could make his home elsewhere in the Islamic world. I would repeat the observations of the earlier memorial that it is my earnest desire that while my eldest son is at an impressionable and malleable age, there should be prepared for his occupancy in India of a sphere of personal influence and authority to be utilised, in accordance with the family traditions extending over a century, for the good of our immediate followers of India as a whole, and of the British Empire.

The debate that had taken place between London and India five years before was now repeated, although with different emphasis and a Viceroy not quite as keen as Willingdon had been on granting the Aga fresh privileges. Patrick quickly produced facts to demonstrate that the Aga's claim that he had been cheated out of something that was promised him in 1916 had no basis. Nor, in the India Office's view, had Aly's chances of succeeding his father improved.

Outwardly the Aga showed little of such concerns when he arrived in

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India in the winter of 1938. Jinnah, now supreme leader of the Muslim League, was moving close to the 'two nations' theory: Hindus and Muslims could never be part of one country. He asserted that the Muslim League was the only genuine voice of the Muslims, while the Congress could only claim to represent the Hindus. The Aga was not keen to make public pronouncements on such issues but he met Gandhi and, curiously, felt closer to him than to Jinnah. Jinnah seemed to be bogged down in definitions and the Aga was quite prepared for a pact between the Congress and the Muslim League that would contain no definition of what precisely 'Congress' and 'Muslim League' stood for. If Jinnah and his friends were not open to compromise, the Aga was willing to appeal over their heads to the Muslim masses. The Aga also came away from his meeting with Gandhi feeling he wasn't quite as 'anti-Indian princes' as he he had been made out to be.

The Aga took some of these impressions with him when, on 21st January 1939, he met A. G. Laithwaite, private secretary to the Viceroy in Delhi. As had happened five years earlier, it was discussions with officials that revealed the purpose behind the Aga's demand. The new income tax bill being introduced in India, the Aga told Laithwaite, would have a considerable effect on his personal income:

> His Highness explained that he was in the habit of receiving large sums from his followers in all parts of the Middle East, the African Coast, etc, of the nature of 'Peter's pence'. A small part only of them remained at his own disposal as they had in fact to be applied for beneficient purposes connected with his faith. The fact of the new income tax act would be that all non-Indian income would be added to Indian income, and he was greatly disturbed at the thought that he might, in his own words be 'harassed' by the innumerable income tax enquiries, requests for accounts, receipts, etc. in respect of large sums of monies emanating from the most diverse countries. He begged that the Viceroy should give instruction to the Income Tax Authorities that either they should take his own word for the amounts involved, or have an annual or three-yearly forfeit. If they were not prepared to accept either of these propositions and insisted on demanding detailed accounts, he saw nothing for it, serious as the decision might be, but to sell his property in India and sever his connections with India, leaving his followers in this country free of obligation, customary or otherwise, to contribute to him and explaining to them that the offerings at present made should be applied to the purposes in India which he at present met from the funds placed at his disposal. If, on the other hand, some compromise of this nature could be arrived at, he was perfectly ready to remain resident as at present.

Hand in hand with the tax worry, went the question of the title. Aly, the Aga told Laithwaite, felt very strongly about it too; surely the British ought to respect 'his feelings and those of his family.'

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The next day the Aga met Lord Linlithgow himself. Much the same ground was covered and the Viceroy was quite interested in the Aga's gossip on Gandhi. He was also sympathetic about a title for Aly and quite understood the Aga's dislike 'of making his private accounts available to the income tax authorities.' He got his Finance Member, James Grigg, to look into it. The India Office, however, did not quite like the tune that Linlithgow had begun to sing.

As Patrick was quick to point out, how could the Secretary of State guarantee Aly Khan the title of His Highness when that title was only bestowed on the head of the Khan family once he became the spiritual leader of the Khojas? All that could be promised was that 'there is every hope that it will be possible to continue' the title if, and when, Aly succeeded the Aga as spiritual leader, 'but that no promise can be given in advance.' Zetland agreed with Patrick.

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So far we have had the almost exact replay of 1933. A Viceroy eager to help the Aga, treasuring the help he gave in keeping the natives quiet, the India Office in London extremely wary of anything to do with the Aga. They became even more worried when they heard of the income tax concessions that Linlithgow was arranging for the Aga. On 14th February 1939 Linlithgow wrote to Zetland, 'I am glad to say that Grigg has been quite co-operative about his [Aga's] income tax and I hope that a representative of the Income Tax Department here will surely make contact with the Aga Khan's man of business, either here or in Bombay, and see to what extent we can probably help.'

While Patrick wondered 'what juggling with the IT cases in India can be done to help the Aga Khan' the Aga returned to Europe. Perhaps he sensed that Grigg's juggling would not help. For the first time in Paris he stayed in apartments at 55 Rue Scheffer, instead of his favourite Ritz Hotel, so long his headquarters on the Continent. The Aga was not in Paris for long and by March he had moved to Villa Jane-Andrée in the Boulevard Cap d'Antibes. It was here that, on 21st March 1939, he received a telephone call from Lord Zetland. The call, however, was not to do with India or the Aga's tax position but about Palestine. A Round Table Conference was being held in London of all the parties involved in the Palestine issue and Zetland wanted the Aga to help out with discussions. This is perhaps not as surprising a request as it may seem, for the Aga had been peripherally involved with the Palestine issue over the previous two years. He had never much cared for the Arab revolt against the Turks, and even in his *Memoirs*, he regretted that his own plans for a Federation of Turkey, the Arab States in the Middle East and Egypt, with a single defence force and a united foreign policy had not come into being. But he had steadily reported to the British the growing Muslim concern over Palestine. During his year as President of the League of Nations he had been much impressed with the Arab, particularly Iraqi, criticisms of the Balfour Declaration and, when summing up his year as President, he drew attention to Muslim

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dissatisfaction with British policy in Palestine. But though Lord Zetland had found these views 'important and interesting', it failed to make much of an impression on the Foreign Office or the Cabinet. By 1938, however, as Arabs rioted against British plans to partition Palestine, the Aga once again came into prominence as a possible mediator.

In October 1938 the *Daily Express* suggested in an editorial that the Aga might go out to Palestine to sort out affairs. The Aga, in a letter to Beaverbrook on 21st October 1938, indicated that he would be 'only too happy to accept' any invitation by the British Government to go to Palestine. It is possible that the Aga and Beaverbrook had thought of the editorial together, Beaverbrook being not above writing editorials for his own paper. The Zetland summons in March 1939 may have been as a result of this, or it was a private Zetland initiative, recalling the Aga's early intelligence about the Arab disquiet over Palestine. Zetland was aware that the Colonial Office — which was in charge of Palestine — did not much care to involve the Aga on this question, but probably felt he could be useful.

The Aga flew to London the day after he received the call and met Zetland and Malcolm MacDonald, Secretary of State for the Colonies. He quickly examined the Government's proposals as well as the final suggestions of the Arabs. On the morning of 23rd March he had a long conference with the Egyptian Minister and the Iraqi representative, the Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia and Mr George Atonim, the Secretary of the Palestinian Delegation. The Aga had no more than thirty-six hours. The Arabs had already decided to leave and even booked their passage. After a great deal of hard negotiation, with talks lasting until midnight, the Aga was able to hammer out a basic agreement with the Arabs. They would agree to the British Immigration quotas and Britain would issue a declaration promising Palestine independence after a period of ten years. The British, however, would have the right to delay independence after ten years, but this would mean the calling of another conference to explain the reason for the delay.

The Aga had actually wrung more concessions from the Arabs but, as he later confessed to Linlithgow, in the cold light of day they had reneged 'the sort of thing [that] happens rather often unfortunately at conferences.' If only, he told Linlithgow, he had been summoned three weeks earlier rather than thirty-six hours earlier, he might have produced a final agreement. There was much Government appreciation of what the Aga had attempted to do. On 21st April 1939 they suggested that en route to East Africa he should drop in at Cairo and have a chat to the Egyptian Prime Minister and Government. The Aga suggested a final plan to bring peace to Palestine, which involved the Egyptian Government sending its Prime Minister, or one of its most important statesmen, to Palestine to meet the Mufti of Jerusalem and other leaders and help call off the Arab rebellion. However, no sooner had the Aga reached Alexandria than he became ill with dysentery. In early May 1939, just a month after he had written so optimistically to Linlithgow, he was back in Europe.

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In the long, tangled history of Palestine, the London Round Table Conference — much less the Aga's role in it — is no more than a pimple: to the Aga, however, it was a momentous event, as he later described to Linlithgow; it had been quite 'electrifying'. In retrospect, this must have acquired a glow, for things in Europe, as he wrote to Lothian on 10th May 1939, were 'getting worse instead of better.' The Aga now feared the possibility of war, and feared its consequences for India. Britain at war would mean that India, a subject country, would have no choice. The effect would be disastrous: substantial increase in taxation, piling up of debt charges, even further lowering of the slender margin of subsistence at which the vast masses of Indians lived, and 'formidable additions' to the debit side of Anglo-Indian relations. The Aga had no concrete plans to stop the present drift to war except to wonder why Britain, with all her wealth and power, led by Chamberlain and 'with so great a Christian as Lord Halifax at the Foreign Office' was not able to exercise 'active, creative influence in bringing about God's peace in Europe and as on earth.' It was a well-timed appeal to Lothian's Christian sympathies but by now even Lothian was convinced that there must be some resistance to Hitler. He had recently read the unexpurgated version of *Mein Kampf* and had been quite shocked by the strategic cast of Hitler's mind and the ruthless way in which he implemented those ideas.

The Aga accepted Lothian's view that Hitler's mind was Napoleonic, but contended that the strategy of responding to Hitler's Napoleon with a British Hannibal was quite wrong. 'The fundamental weakness of the Winston/Duff Cooper strategy is an assumption that by a succession of successful wars Germany can be dealt with as Carthage was by Rome.' Carthage was a rotten Asiatic state, Germany a virile Nordic one which would survive any number of wars. Yes, he agreed with Lothian, Hitler and his friends are short-sighted, but how else could they behave:

> They are really like children who have been brought up to expect sweets only after a lot of crying and mischief. During the whole of what the Germans now call the 'bowing and scraping period', the Germans got none of their fundamental demands adjusted. When I was in Germany and saw Goering and Hitler in October 1937 both of them distinctly and deliberately said that if Great Britain and France *helped* them to reunion with Austria, the freeing of the Sudetenland from the Czechs, and the return of either their former or their equivalent colonies, *they* were willing to join the League, disarmament and all that follows. Nothing was accepted on our side; the result a few weeks later he takes Austria by force.... He rattles the sword of the Czechs and gets all and more than he ever asked for. No wonder by now he is spoilt and sees things at a wrong angle.

The Aga still believed that the spoilt child could be reformed and could be made to appreciate that it could get sweets without a lot of crying and mischief. And if it was not possible to meet Hitler, perhaps a Cabinet

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Minister or somebody like Lothian with ambassadorial rank could go out and talk to Mussolini. Though the Aga's analogies were characteristically picturesque, Hitler was no child. The time for playing European games had long gone.

In the next few months the Aga kept himself in the public eye. A friend of his, Nawroji M. Dumasia, an assistant editor of the *Times of India*, published his book on the Aga and his ancestors. The book was meant to counteract newspaper gossip and legends, like the one about the Aga Khan being 'one of the greatest individual ice cream consumers in the world.' Dumasia had somehow managed to gain access to India Office records, even if his use of the records was partisan and totally ahistorical. He quoted many of the letters that the first Aga Khan had written to the British, carefully omitting any references in the letters to demands for money, but confining himself to the vague descriptions of his services to the British in their campaigns in India. It was meant to provide the background to the third Aga's claim to be 'a citizen of the world'. *The Times*, while accepting that description, shrewdly guessed that the full story of the Aga Khans was yet to be written. It is as a commentary on the books about the Aga Khan that this tawdry, ahistorical work is still, probably, the most complete.

That summer found the Aga back at his favourite hotel in Deauville. Nearby, at Villa Gorizia, were Aly and Joan with their two children, Karim and Amyn — who had been born two years' previously on 13th September 1937 in London. By common consent this was the best and most lighthearted summer of the inter-war years. The parties seemed bigger, better; there seemed to be more millionaires about, more pretty girls and a more carefree devil-may-care attitude. Perhaps this is a reflected view from people recollecting what seemed halcyon pre-war days in a devastated post-war Europe. Perhaps deep down everyone knew that it would be many years, if any, before peace returned.

But for the Aga his supreme holiday at Deauville was marked by a certain restlessness, an unquenchable desire to make peace. He had kept in touch with Walter Hewel ever since their meeting in Germany in 1937, and in July 1939 Hewel arranged a meeting with Hitler. The Aga travelled from Deauville to Switzerland and was just about to proceed to Germany when he had a bad attack of earache and had to postpone his visit. As he lay in bed, his cherished appointment with Hitler was cancelled. Still the Aga persisted. On 4th August 1939 he wrote to Lothian that he was planning to be in Germany by the end of September and was glad that the Government was at last approaching Mussolini for talks. But he feared that 'the old gang', meaning Churchill, Duff Cooper and Anthony Eden, might turn this into another 'front against Germany ... in that case there would be an inevitable earthquake sooner or later.'

But as the Aga nursed his ear, Hitler marched his troops into Poland — and almost immediately the Aga heard news of a personally more devastating kind. In late August Linlithgow had at last replied to the Aga's Memorial on special immunities and privileges. For all his 'juggling', Linlithgow's Finance Member, Sir James Grigg, could not exempt the Aga

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from Indian income tax. All he was able to do was make sure that the income tax inspectors assessed the Aga very leniently. With Zetland's full support, Linlithgow, in a polite but very firm answer, refused all the Aga's requests. He had looked up the records to prove that the Aga's claim about a gap between promise and reality was totally baseless and, much as he loved the Aga, and recognized the great service he had done the Empire, there was nothing he could do for him.

The war was already a few days old when Linlithgow's reply reached the Aga. The India Office, now repenting a little, wondered if they had perhaps encouraged the Viceroy to be 'unnecessarily forthcoming', thus 'discouraging' any pro-British role the Aga might play in the war. In fact, though the British Government were not to realize it then, nor perhaps the Aga himself, relations between the two had reached a historical divide. Linlithgow's final rejection of the Aga's demand marked a watershed. Unlike the First World War, the Aga had no public role as Britain's man in the Muslim World dealing with the various bush fires — or thinking he was dealing with them. The houris had vanished, the voluptuary was no longer news, he was just a private citizen living in neutral Switzerland. But though this was not quite the centre-stage of the First World War, the Aga was still capable of enacting memorable scenes from behind the curtains and attracting attention.

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BOOK FOUR

WAR

(1939 – 1945)

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Chapter 29

A Job for Aly

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Just a week before Hitler's troops invaded Poland, the Aga, in a telegram to Zetland, offered the services of Aly for war-time intelligence work along the North-West Frontier Provinces of India, Egypt and Syria. But Aly, he felt, would be most usefully employed in Syria where he could raise trustworthy troops for France or East Africa, where he could also raise volunteers for India or perhaps be trained for the Indian Army.

The day after Hitler's troops invaded Poland, the Aga submitted two messages of support for the British — one addressed to his Khojas, the other to 'all my brothers in India and other British Dominions.' His earache had obviously turned into something much more, for he told the India Office that he had to have an operation, but once that was successful — and the Swiss mobilization was over — he would be fit for personal service. There was some quibbling by the Viceroy about the exact wording of the Aga's messages and it was almost the last week of September before they were publicized. A job for Aly created quite different problems.

Aly, as a war-time intelligence agent scouring the North-West Frontier Provinces and Central Asia with the help of the Aga's followers had had the right romantic touch for a man who had shown signs of developing into a pre-war James Bond. While the Aga played his self-appointed role as Citizen of the World, Aly's life style was a sort of preview of what was to become the norm of the jetset age. Joan took a Muslim name, Thaudowlah, and generally set up a base somewhere — be it Bognor, as in the summer of 1937, or London — Aly flitted about the various places on the Continent. The birth of his second son, Amyn, had that touch of excitement that seemed to suit his life style. In September 1937 they were staying with Lord Carnarvon, near Newbury. Suddenly Joan had labour pains, and the doctor told her that she could expect the baby in an hour and a half. It required nifty driving from Aly's driver, Emrys Williams, to make it back to the hospital in London in time. Then in 1938 Aly and Joan had toured East Africa, including a safari into the Masai Reserve, and there had been winters in Gstaad where the Khan family gathered to celebrate Christmas, with Aly much enjoying giving presents to all and sundry.

India and Linlithgow were doubtful that Aly would be much use in the North-West Frontier Provinces. The Aga certainly had 'influential

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disciples' or 'revenue collectors' who could gather intelligence, but Linlithgow thought Aly would be more use in Syria or Egypt, or possibly even on the African coast. London, however, had always placed greater value on the Aga's followers in Central Asia than India, and with the Soviets now siding with Hitler, they were more keen than ever to find out everything they possibly could about Russian activities in that region. Linlithgow, prodded by Zetland, on 24th September 1939, offered Aly some sort of job:

> We are most anxious not to reject Aga Khan's offer, but the fact is that the Aga Khan's followers in India are scattered and *do not constitute a community carrying any influence*, and we are doubtful whether Aly Khan could give us any real assistance in controlling frontier tribes or marshalling Moslem opinion in India. The best suggestion we can make is that Aly Khan should serve as an attached officer in the Director of the Intelligence Bureau's office on the understanding that he could and would provide a small band of active and efficient travelling agents whose expenses he would meet for work mostly on the Chitral and Gilgit border.

Had Aly known the India Office arm-twisting that had produced this response from Linlithgow, he would have been amused — and perhaps delighted. But the idea of serving in India was not his but his father's. He knew France, liked the French and quite fancied the idea of joining the French army in Syria, a country in which his father's followers had become much devoted to Aly. Aly had already sounded out the French about this and on 14th September 1939, M Roche of the French Embassy in London had visited Mr Baggaley at the Foreign Office to ask if the British would object to Aly serving with the French forces in Syria. Aly was himself subject to arm-twisting — from the Aga who was keen Aly should go to India. When the British Consul in Geneva personally conveyed Linlithgow's proposals to the Aga, the Aga told him that he wanted to see his son in Lausanne before 10th October 1939. There were family matters to be discussed but, more importantly, Aly was young and the Aga wanted to make sure that in India he 'got in touch with the right people.'

One of them, Zetland, was already in touch with Aly and had arranged for him to come up to London from Deanville. Aly, presumably after seeing his father, arrived in London in October 1939 and met Zetland at the India Office on the 6th. Zetland explained to Aly the Viceroy's proposal for employment in India, taking some pains to obscure the fact that the Viceroy had often changed his mind about employing Aly, that it was not a very definite offer, and that it was really a rather peripheral activity. Aly was polite, but he could not hide his disappointment that he was not going to Syria to serve with the French there. But by the end of the interview Zetland was convinced that Aly would accept the Viceroy's offer and soon proceed to India.

Personal interviews of this nature can often be difficult. Aly was acutely

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aware that the whole thing had been arranged by his father. Zetland was of his father's generation, and a man his father often talked about. Father's acquaintances, if not father's friends, were difficult people to deal with — and Aly had not been able to tell Zetland that his heart was really not in going to India. He spent a restless night back at the Ritz Hotel, and the next morning he used the only escape clause available. He wrote a long letter to Zetland: 'I must confess that what I most crave is to do combat and service on the Western Front, but if this is not feasible, I would like to do something at least directly connected with the great struggle of the Allies.'

Instead of India he would much prefer to raise in Syria

> a large body of cavalry to serve the Allied cause, while attached for initial military training to the staff of a French General at first as A.D.C. and later possibly a Liaison Officer. I would take steps first to raise and equip at my own expense such a mounted auxiliary either for service at the front or in the Near East, thus releasing French troops in Syria for the Western Front.

On 14th October, Zetland informed Aly that he had no objection to his serving with the French in Syria. Zetland knew, but did not of course mention in his letter that Linlithgow would have few regrets. For the Aga it was a different story and within a year the whole business of Aly Khan being employed in India would be reopened.

The Aga had no plans to return to India — or, for that matter, England. After his recovery from whatever ailed him, he moved from Geneva to Lausanne to persuade Aly to go to India, and then travelled to his villa in the South of France. There had been some plans to make a quick visit to India in February 1940, the Aga hopeful that he and his men could provide the Government with valuable intelligence, while Zetland felt that an Aga visit might strengthen the hand of the British in India faced by an increasingly hostile Congress. The visit does not appear to have materialized but there is some confusion on this and for the Aga, sharing the confidence of millions of French in the impregnability of the Maginot Line, life continued at very much the pre-war tempo. Even as the phoney war ended and Hitler began to make his first moves in the spring of 1940, the Aga was not particularly perturbed although his English secretary, Freda Blair, decided it was time to return to England. On her departure, the Aga told her he would always be contactable c/o Lloyds Bank in Geneva.

Within a few weeks of Freda Blair's departure the Aga, together with millions of others, found his world turned upside-down. The Aga, of course, was not alone in failing to appreciate the speed with which Hitler's Panzer divisions would conquer Europe and, as the Blitzkreig hit France, he began feverishly to think of ways of getting out. He would later try to convince the India Office that he had indeed thought of returning to England — or, more accurately, thought of returning his car to England. But the Germans had taken this near Bordeaux. The Aga, accompanied by Andrée, Sadruddin and his tutor, a nurse and a few Indian servants, headed

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for Switzerland. He had never actually acquired a permanent Swiss visa, but over the years this had made little difference as for him the Swiss visa was normally only a formality. But now, as he arrived at the Swiss frontier, he found the usually friendly border guards extremely suspicious. The Swiss Government were annoyed that his message of loyalty to the British Empire in September 1939 had been sent from Switzerland and now refused to give him a visa unless he gave a 'confidential understanding' that he would make no public declarations, except of a religious character. The Aga, desperate to get into Switzerland, readily complied.

As in the First World War, Switzerland — the ideal neutral haven — had attracted agents, spies and diplomats, all pursuing their own favourite theories; none more assiduously than a German called Prince Max von Hohenlohe-Ladenburg of Schloss Rotenhaus near Gorkau in the German Sudetenland. Before the war, Hohenlohe had visited England and met the Aga, and just about the time Hitler was coming to power in Germany Hohenlohe had dined with the Aga and had been guest of the Duke of Windsor, then Prince of Wales. In Switzerland, in the summer of 1940, the paths of the two men crossed again. They often stayed in the same hotel and, inevitably, discussed the war. They discovered that they had a common friend in Walter Hewel. The German troops were now at the Channel, the air was full of talk of a German invasion of England and, according to what Hohenlohe reportedly told Hewel, the Aga was keen to convey certain news to the Führer. He told Hohenlohe to tell Hewel that the day the Führer put up for the night in Windsor Castle he, the Aga, along with the ex-Khedive of Egypt, would drink a bottle of champagne together. King Farouk of Egypt was in Switzerland and the Aga was sure that he would join in their celebrations. If Germany or Italy were thinking of taking over India, then, the Aga allegedly continued, he was willing to help them organize the country. But he thought that Hitler should not attack England directly; it might be less of an effort in troops and materials if he were to conquer Egypt first. The American hope would not be of much use to England since she did not have trained manpower, Churchill was in the pay of the Jews, or the King was too weak. The only really powerful man in England was Beaverbrook but he would not stand up to Churchill — in any case he had financed him for a long time. The Aga, according to German reports, confessed to Hohenlohe that while he had always been against war, if he returned to England with these ideas, Churchill would undoubtedly lock him up despite his high rank. Though Hewel was glad to hear from the Aga, the Nazis, it appeared, had no great plans to use him — except as a postbag to warn the British and unless they came to terms with Hitler they would be destroyed. On 2nd August 1940 the German Foreign Office, in a telegram to the officer in charge of the German Consulate in Geneva, advised him to keep in touch with the Aga.

Shortly after the Aga's death, in 1958, when the captured German documents, including Hohenlohe's reports to Hewel were published, Aly strongly denied that his father could have had any such conversations. His father's sympathies were always with the British and there could never have

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been any doubt about it. It is possible that Hohenlohe embroidered these — and other conversations — that he had had with the Aga over the summer and winter of 1940. Hohenlohe after all was keen to build up his own image in the eyes of Hewel and the Nazis, and the Aga was undoubtedly a good catch. With Europe seemingly all Nazi, there were many who thought they ought to come to terms with the new power, and the Aga would have been exceptional indeed had he not, at least considered the possibility. Up to the last moment, or at least until his earache intervened, the Aga, in his own way, sought to prevent war between Germany and Britain. And during the phoney war period he had discussed many a proposal to get Britain and Germany together. In fact, in April 1940, he had met the Duke of Windsor and the two men had agreed that war with Germany would be disastrous for Britain. About this time the Aga undoubtedly found the British connection irksome — if not dangerous. Just as Hohenlohe was supposed to be having his chat with the Aga, the British, much to the Aga's discomfort, were trying to contact him. On 3rd August 1940, the Government of India informed London that the Aga's people in Punjab were extremely worried about him. They had heard nothing for several months and wanted a message, either relayed through Reuters or the BBC, as to where he was and what he was doing.

Patrick, through the help of Freda Blair, ascertained that the Aga could be contacted c/o Lloyds Bank, Geneva, and on 9th August, Sir David Kelly, British Minister in Berne, sent a messenger to the Aga. On the 14th, the Aga travelled from Geneva to Berne to meet Kelly. Far from wanting to reassure his religious followers in the Punjab, the Aga was extremely reluctant to send any message at all. He told Kelly of the hassles he had had with the Swiss immigration officials over his 'loyalty to the British Empire' message and he had been further embarrassed by a telegram from the Governor of Bombay similar to the one sent by the Government of India to the India Office. His position in Switzerland, the Aga told Kelly, was extremely delicate and requests of such nature did not help.

The Aga was aware that his Khoja flock in India needed to be looked after, but he thought Aly ought to be their wartime shepherd. He had agreed to Aly's Syrian adventure with grave misgivings and now felt that the young man, having had his head, should do his duty. In a sharp private telegram to Aly, the Aga had warned him that he risked losing everything by remaining in the Middle East when the family's historic position as God of the Khojas was at stake. Aly had already been released by the French from Syria, but he was keen to be considered for a post in Egypt under the C-in-C Middle East, a position that the Viceroy himself was arranging for him. The Aga now saw this as an opportunity to force Aly to go to India and he told Kelly that Aly should be sent there immediately via Bombay where he should place himself at the Viceroy's disposal. Aly's wife and children would follow in September 'when weather conditions improved', and this would solve all his followers' problems. Any statement of Aly's would be 'universally accepted as representing' the Aga's own views.

The message seemed innocuous enough, but in London it set Patrick's

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sharp Aga-antennae jangling. He was probably the one British official who knew more about the Aga than anybody else. London intercepted the telegram that the Aga had sent Aly about his need to go to India, and Patrick, putting two and two together, concluded that this looked very much like a family quarrel with the Aga using the India Office to get Aly to do his bidding. There was no ready employment for Aly in India and it seemed extremely dubious to Patrick that either London, or the Viceroy, should intervene in a family quarrel:

> It is probably for the Viceroy to judge whether we should back Aly Khan's claim to succeed the Aga Khan in his spiritual capacity by acting on his request. Personally I should consider the wisest course is to leave the matter for a decision by Aly Khan himself.

Aly seemed to be reluctantly bowing to his father's wishes and arranged for temporary leave of absence from Egypt to visit India in November 1940. To the Aga this was not enough. He travelled down to Berne and once again met Kelly. It was absolutely vital, he told Kelly, that the Viceroy should both attach Aly to the army in India and give him some propaganda work there. His example would then influence thousands. 'In Egypt, on the other hand, he is of little use.' Hard as such compulsion would have been, the problem was that the Viceroy could not find a suitable job for Aly in India.

After almost two months, in October 1940, the Viceroy confessed 'we are finding it very difficult to place him,' and it was November before the Viceroy constructed some sort of job in India for Aly Khan. He was offered a commission in His Majesty's Indian Land Forces as a second lieutenant with promotion to acting major on appointment. He was to be attached to the headquarters of the South Command, but 'free to be employed thereafter in whatever capacity seems best.' And he would be able to draw the pay of a regimental major. But for Aly this was very like a military backwater where the only alternative to boredom was the occasional opportunity to play God to his father's Khoja followers. He now began to prevaricate, using some of the finely honed delaying tactics that his great-grandfather, Aga I, had used. Aga I had used them against the British to finally win asylum in India; Aly used it against his own father to stay on in the Middle East. The Aga never gave up his efforts to get Aly to go to India and this Aga v. Aly private war was waged as relentlessly — and almost as long as — the public one. The only other thing that would worry the Aga more was, curiously, money. For long periods in the war the Aga seemed close to despair in his efforts to get enough money to continue life in Switzerland.

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Chapter 30

Winking at the Aga

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It was, curiously, Walter Hewel who first discerned what the war might do to the Aga's finances. When, in the winter of 1940, Hohenlohe reported to Hewel on yet another chat with the Aga, allegedly suggesting various things the Germans could do to bring England to her knees, Hewel replied 'the good Khan carries too much on his shoulders for us to be able to use him politically in any way. Furthermore, he has all his money in England and certainly won't be interested in the destruction of England, even though he pretends to us to be so.' Perhaps the Aga himself did not appreciate the financial problems that total war, such as the Second World War developed into, would pose for him. Until now, for the Aga's generation, the First World War was the most cataclysmic event imaginable, releasing a torrent of nationalism which made the Second inevitable. But though the Aga had watched this nationalism grow — until 1912 as we have seen, he had not even required a passport on his various travels — even the First World War had not destroyed the sort of freedom of movement and finance that the Aga had come to enjoy and depend on. For much of the First World War he had moved about between the Continent and England, and the fact that all his finances were in England made no difference to his standard of living. It was the Second World War which was to give rise to the numbered accounts in Swiss banks and the Aga was to realize that the price for using London as an international financial centre could be a heavy one. For after the war began, Britain imposed exchange controls and, by the winter of 1940, the Aga had begun to feel the squeeze.

On 9th October 1940, the Aga met Kelly in Geneva. The meeting had been arranged at the India Office's request, not to discuss the Aga's finances but because Linlithgow wanted the Aga's help. The Congress, increasingly embittered by Linlithgow's conduct and his unilateral declaration of war on India's behalf — had begun slowly to take an anti-war position. Linlithgow was planning to arrest Gandhi and thought that the Aga's palace in Poona, which a previous Viceroy had felt might be fit for an 'Aga state', would be a good place in which to intern Gandhi; civil, yet out of harm's way. Kelly had arranged to meet the Aga to make the necessary arrangements. The Aga quickly agreed and, quite naturally, used the occasion to impress on Kelly his desperate financial position. He could

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not, he told Kelly, manage 'on less that £400 a month and could such an amount be transferred from his Indian revenues to Switzerland.' But the Aga was in luck. He had taken up residence in Switzerland just before the issue of the Finance Department's communique of 8th July 1940 regarding restrictions on sterling remittances. The India Office decided that the Viceroy had the power to transmit the necessary funds to the Aga, after judging whether his scale of expenses was justifiable. Soon after Linlithgow had informed the Aga about the job he had got for Aly, he sanctioned a monthly remittance of £400. Linlithgow was quite keen that the Aga should return, if not to India at least to a Sterling area and officially approved only two months' remittance. Perhaps, he suggested, the Aga 'should return' from Switzerland via France. The India Office were not at all sure that such a request could be made and Patrick, who had almost developed a sixth sense about the Aga's thoughts, felt that if such a request was made it was 'not improbable that the Aga would plead ill-health or the need for medical treatment as precluding his travel.'

But £400 was not nearly enough for the Aga. The amount may have seemed a princely sum to the India Office, but in wartime Switzerland it did not even provide the Aga with a standard of living to which he had been accustomed — or at least this is what he complained. Even in his house in pre-war days the Aga, a hard-headed horse owner, had regularly sold off his horses once a year to augment his capital. In August and November 1940 he sold two stallions to the United States, realizing the equivalent of £60,000 in dollars. On 24th November 1940, the Aga appealed to Leo Amery's 'sense of fairness ... [and] principle of fair play', and had some of the halcyon money credited to him in Switzerland. On the surface it was a fairly reasonable request; he only wanted £6,000 out of the £60,000, leaving the equivalent of £54,000 in dollars for Britain to buy arms with in America. 'We are not,' he assured Amery, 'here for pleasure but had to come as refugees.' He pleaded for an 'early decision' so as to clarify his 'most uncertain standing' in Switzerland. Unfortunately for the Aga, his telegram to Amery was decoded wrongly and his request for £6,000 acquired an extra nought and became £60,000 — a figure that quite staggered the India Office. But even when the extra nought had been removed it was, as one official noted, 'difficult to feel much sympathy with the application.' In ordinary circumstances such a request would have certainly been refused — unless there were strong political reasons to the contrary. And that meant consulting Linlithgow.

Now Linlithgow had realized that the Aga was not going to return to India or a Sterling area and that it was best to 'let him stay where he is.' The amount of sterling lost in this way would not be 'very considerable and it is obvious that he is not at all anxious to move.' He arranged to transfer the £6,000, plus about £500 which were the proceeds of the sale of yet another horse that the Aga had made, and settled matters with the Aga in direct personal correspondence, leaving London to conclude, as so often in the past, that political considerations in India had made the Aga's path easier.

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It was understandable if officials in London were bitter about the Aga

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living in what appeared to be luxury in wartime neutral Switzerland while they suffered the bombs of Nazi Germany. The war, and the worry about money and Aly, already seemed to have taken their toll on the Aga. On 9th December 1940 when Hohenlohe met the Aga, at the Aga's request, in Zurich — the Aga having travelled down from Lugarno — Hohenlohe was quite shocked to see how he had aged. His statements were not quite coherent; he often seemed to contradict comments he had made in July and he was obsessed about what would happen to his money and his property. If what Hohenlohe reported to Hewel is accurate, then the Aga had become even more embittered with the British. He suggested, so Hohenlohe said, that the way to make England sue for peace was to follow a policy of 'Coventrization', meaning total destruction of the cities as the Nazis had done in Coventry. And this should be followed up by the cutting off of imports. But the Aga was just as disturbed by Nazi actions and sorrowfully related to Hohenlohe the German seizure of his prize race horses, despite his claim of Iranian citizenship. What a pity, he told Hohenlohe, that his best property was in Ireland, a neutral haven he could not reach.

Again Hohenlohe may have exaggerated — or lied — but the Aga's desire to acquire Iranian citizenship was real enough and would involve the Office in one of the most curious episodes of the war. The Aga seems to have got the idea when he heard that the German authorities were introducing new regulations regarding enemy property in occupied France. They now required all British subjects to declare their assets to the Germans. The Aga and Aly had substantial assets in Paris; securities, bank balances, horses, gold and the apartments he had acquired just a few months before the war broke out. The Aga, a British subject and a public supporter of the British, now feared losing everything. He frantically approached the Iranian Consul in Geneva who advised him that the Iranian Consul in Paris might be able to afford him protection provided he received direct instructions from the Shah. On 20th December 1940, the Aga cabled the India Office:

> Do you approve my requesting such help or, if you do not formally approve, have you any objection? This procedure might prevent useful substantial assets being acquired by Germany. Please reply urgent as matter has already suffered considerably from delay.

Initially, the India Office were not at all sure what the German regulations were that the Aga was referring to. It had already been worked out that British assets in Germany were substantially greater than German assets in the British Empire; tit for tat confiscation would harm the British more than the Germans.

It was the Aga's reference to the Iranians that was most puzzling. Many heads in the India Office pondered for a long time as to what exactly the Aga was driving at. Patrick, the accepted authority on the Aga in the India Office, minuted:

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Does he want to invoke the Iranian Government's assistance in a friendly capacity, or is it his intention to claim Persian nationality on the grounds that his grandfather, who followed the British retreat from Afghanistan after the first Afghan war, was originally a Persian official? There has been no official* connection between the present Aga Khan and Persia, he is a British subject by birth but he enjoys the honorific status of a 'first class chief of the Bombay Presidency' and the personal title of Highness and salute of eleven guns.'

Patrick suggested that if the Aga did turn to the Iranians, then he could not expect to retain his British privileges. But, 'there may be grounds for winking at the Aga Khan's method of protecting his property of which the Department is not aware.'

Another official, Mr R. Peel, agreed with Patrick that the Aga should be 'warned that he cannot have things both ways.' Peel thought that the Aga might devise 'some scheme for disguising his property with the Iranian consul's assets without disclosing his interest in it.'

The Foreign Office joined in the debate and pointed out that under the International Convention relating to Conflict of Nationality Laws — a convention that Germany and Britain had signed but not Persia — the Aga could claim Persian nationality in a third country like France, though this would mean that in France he could no longer claim British nationality.

On this point Linlithgow was in no mood to humour the Aga. The Iranian Nationality Law was quite extraordinary. All direct descendents of Iranian subjects possessed Iranian nationality *ad infinitum*. The Aga's desire to opt for Iranian nationality seemed 'strange ... for one who has enjoyed widespread honour in Empire and acted as British delegate to the League of Nations.' Leo Amery, who knew and rather liked the Aga, was inclined to be rather more sympathetic, but not even he could see his way round the legal problems involved. On 31st January 1941, the Foreign Office telegraphed Kelly to inform the Aga that the India Office could not approve his 'requesting Iranian protection.' Germany would never treat him as anything other than a British subject — and his proposed action would be futile.

The Foreign Office telegram was forceful — and Kelly presumably sent this — and nothing more was heard of the Aga taking Iranian citizenship. The Aga, however, did not entirely lose his interest in Iran.

For the India Office, the Aga's business relations seemed to become curiouser and curiouser. In March of 1941, they squashed what appeared like an Aga plan to transfer $260,000 in American securities from out of the Sterling area, possibly to acquire diamonds and emeralds being bought by an agent of his in Bombay.

Censorship intercepted almost daily telegrams between the Aga Khan and a Mr Camadia Cassamalli of Bombay. Camadia kept suggesting to the Aga

* Though in conversation HH has justified to me Aly Khan's claim to call himself Prince on the grounds that he has a hereditary Persian title as such.

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ways for disposing of portions of the Aga's Stud, and the Aga in turn kept making requests for the purchase of jewellery. Practically all his stud in France had now been sequestrated by the Germans, and almost as a compensation his agent in Bombay seemed to be buying vast quantities of pearls and emeralds. In order to convey what Camadia bought for the Aga he used a sort of Khoja code. One telegram said:

> Your Highness, my spiritual lord and only through your blessings benefit your Highnesses twice as much as the usual percentage of profit in our rough business.

Just a few days after these telegrams had begun to be intercepted, on 29th March 1941, the Treasury wrote a letter to Patrick. Canadian Exchange Control, with whom the Treasury worked very closely, had received a request to allow the export of $260,000 of American securities owned by a Canadian bank on behalf of the Aga Khan, who was described to the Canadians as a resident of Switzerland. Ordinarily, the Canadian Control did not allow Swiss residents to remove assets from Canada, and had turned to the Treasury for advice. Initially, the Treasury officials had thought the Aga was arranging to surrender his American securities to the Government of India who had recently made a vesting order covering certain American securities. But a little digging, with the help of the Bank of England, soon revealed the Aga's purpose was not quite so patriotic.

The request for the export of securities had come from Lloyds & National Provincial Foreign Bank of Geneva, and shipment was to be made to the Bank of London and South America in New York. No reason was given for the export. The bank had already been receiving income from the securities ever since Exchange Control had been instituted in Canada. If the Aga had wanted to surrender his securities, then he would have routed it through the Treasury's agents, the Bank of Montreal in New York, for handling that particular transaction.

So what was the Aga up to? And should the Treasury allow the Canadians to waive Exchange Control? It thought the Aga possibly wanted to remove some of his money outside the Sterling area; possibly the transfer of the securities was connected with the purchase of diamonds and emeralds by Camadia Cassmalli in Bombay. Whatever it was, it could not be sanctioned.

To the Aga there was no alternative left but to petition the Viceroy again — for more money. On 1st August 1941 he requested that his allowance be raised to £1,000 per month. £400 per month was just not adequate to keep himself, his wife and young son, and a staff of three Indians, two of them married with children. He had not been very well and the medical expenses were high. The request nearly led to apoplexy among India Office officials. A secretary in the Finance Section pointed out that in the last ten months the Aga had had £10,500, at a time when the maximum allowance for British subjects was £10 a month, or £15 a month in hard cases. Patrick acidly noted that 'his most loyal followers in the Middle East,

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Africa and India, many of them old or poor people, could hardly accuse us of treating him miserly on the present basis of £400 a month.' War had begun to change many social attitudes and as G. H. Baxter, another official, noted, 'it is highly important not to give, or seem to give, exceptional treatment to anyone because he is influential or has friends in high places (great social issues are clearly involved and the seeds of serious political trouble).' Predictably the Viceroy turned down the Aga, though as Patrick had noted earlier, the British winked at another Aga arrangement to acquire more funds. Within a month of the Viceroy's refusal — in September 1941 — the Aga had come to an arrangement with George Reinhart of Volkart Brothers in Winterthur, Switzerland, regarding a back-to-back loan. Under the arrangement, Volkart Brothers paid the Aga up to £10,000 a month and the Aga's agents in Bombay paid Volkart a similar amount in rupees. The India Office dutifully intercepted the telegram between Volkart Brothers in Winterthur and Volkart Brothers in Bombay — but did nothing.

A few weeks later the Aga took steps to ensure that some of his other property remained securely in his name. His grandsons, Aly's sons Karim and Amyn, were living in Kenya for the duration of the war, and the Aga decided to transfer all the property the Ismailis owned in East Africa into his own name. This was considerable and had been invested in local trustees and representatives of the Ismailis. Now the Aga took complete control, with an estate manager collecting and remitting the entire proceeds to the Aga's Secretariat in India. The Aga's Secretariat in India did make gifts to various Ismaili charitable institutions in Kenya, like schools and clubs, and they probably equalled the rent and other income the Aga derived from the new arrangement. But, for the Colonial Kenyan Government, the Aga was now subject to income tax. The Governor of Kenya asked what he should do. The India Office could have offered the precedent set by Linlithgow in 1938 when he had got the Indian income tax authorities to assess the Aga liberally. But the India Office saw no reason why Kenya should be informed of such leniency and curtly told Moore that the Aga was 'liable to assessment to Indian income tax in the same way as other British subjects.'

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Chapter 31

A Murky Episode

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On 14th June 1942 the *Sunday Pictorial* ran a front-page story about the Aga. The page was dominated by pictures of how Singapore fell and the vital Libyan battle with Rommel just south of Tobruk, but half way down the right hand column was a photograph of Begum Aga Khan and underneath it the headline:

Is She To Blame?

The Aga Khan, leader of 10,000,000 Muslims, and once one of the world's richest men, is in Paris. Why?

The facts are these:
Since the fall of France the Aga Khan has been living with his beautiful French wife and their son, eight, in Switzerland. He has been cut off from his vast riches. A report reaching London last night says that the Aga Khan travelled from Switzerland at the invitation of Hitler.
An official of the India Office, London, told the *Sunday Pictorial*. 'We do not believe that he would accept an invitation from Germans to return to Paris. Though it is possible that his wife may have influenced him.'
Meanwhile, the Aga Khan's house in Paris is becoming the meeting place of Nazis. Sumptuous dinner parties are being given to Hitler's friends, but the name of the host is not known.

Different editions of the paper carried elaborations of the story: one mentioning the comparative poverty in which the Aga lived in Switzerland and quoting him as saying that he hoped he could return to his house in the French Riviera. It was also mentioned that Maurice Chevalier, Sacha Guitry, Danielle Darrieux and even Abetz, Hitler's envoy, were said to have attended dinners at the Aga's Paris home.

Three days earlier a monitored German broadcast had mentioned the Aga Khan taking part in a skating competition in Berlin and coming second. Although this report was soon proved false (the name Aga Khan had been confused with some other name) the Aga's alleged presence in Paris could not be so easily ignored.

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The Aga was not the most popular Indian with India Office officials. As we have seen, they had always had more hard-headed, perhaps cynical, interpretations of the Aga's motives and actions than the Viceroy and his advisers in India. Patrick could even anticipate what the Aga might do. In the past year, with the Aga's persistent refusal to leave Switzerland — despite Linlithgow's wishes — and his constant badgering for more money, had made the officials even more cynical. Its intelligence had kept a wary eye on Andrée Carron and there had been rumours that she was rather close to a notorious Vichy-French agent. Everything, it seems, was not going right with the relationship of the Aga and his wife, and there were British fears that the Aga might be open to blackmail through Carron and her Vichy connections. The Aga, according to one intelligence source, had actually visited Pétain, head of the Vichy Government that was collaborating with the Germans in occupied France. And it was these doubts which seem to have persuaded the India Office to prompt the *Sunday Pictorial* story. But there is no official evidence to indicate that this was an India Office plant; but it is clear from the very nature of the story that the *Sunday Pictorial* had relied heavily on an India Office briefing. If the idea was to smoke the Aga out, then it worked wonderfully.

No sooner had the *Sunday Pictorial* hit the streets than the Aga's secretary in Newbury, Freda Blair, cabled the Aga in Zurich. The moment he received the cable, the Aga visited the Exchange Telegraph in the city and emphatically denied the reports. He had left Paris before the German occupation and the idea of travelling to any German-occupied country or Germany itself was 'absolutely ridiculous'. When the Reuter correspondent in Zurich contacted him, the Aga told him that it had been several years since he had left Switzerland, that it was impossible to travel outside Switzerland while the country was encircled, and that nearly all his time in the past few months had been spent on the golf course.

There the matter might have rested, but intelligence of a rather more serious kind had been received by the India Office in August 1942. A British agent in Switzerland reported a memorandum that the Aga was said to have addressed the Germans, summarizing his views on the war.

In a letter dated 29th July 1942 a German official in Paris had written to Herr von Woermann, a high official of the German Foreign Office, enclosing a memorandum which was said to contain the Aga's views. These views were:

> Nobody works against Churchill except the Socialists and the Communists who would like Stafford Cripps to get to power. Churchill survives because the English Conservative-capitalist element is still very powerful. These men are very aware of the dangers from the Bolsheviks. There are also these English businessmen.... They always hope that something will come up and turn out better. They do not abandon the idea that something will turn up for the better.
>
> This is why it is necessary to push them into their last British stronghold. That is why the taking of Egypt is so important, more

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important for the end of the war than the taking of Moscow. That is why it is also important to re-take Syria and Palestine.

The men who will make the peace in England are those who have defended the idea of the Empire: 'the Imperialists' like Beaverbrook, Samuel Hoare and Lord Halifax. Not the Socialists and the proletariat who have never in their minds the idea of the Empire....

I believe personally that Beaverbrook will come out victorious. The battle he has undertaken deviously, with Churchill's help, against Stafford Cripps is important and it will therefore be necessary to help him.

Though in some ways this was similar to the Aga's supposed story to Hohenlohe — some eighteen months before — it is necessary to emphasize that these were two entirely separate events. The Aga's conversations with Hohenlohe — whether they took place or not — were routed through Walter Hewel, who was a high-ranking Nazi official close to Hitler. Throughout Hitler's reign in Germany, the German Government was divided between officials who were fervent Nazis and other Germans who worked with the Nazis but did not, necessarily, share their beliefs. The Aga's latest views, made through the more normal channels, had eventually reached von Woermann, a non-Nazi German Foreign Office official. The India Office, at this stage, did not know what the Aga was supposed to have said to Hohenloe and probably would not have cared if they had known.

This memorandum was a somewhat different matter. And against this was intelligence favourable to the Aga. Some agents in Switzerland attributed most of the pro-Vichy, pro-German views of the Aga to his wife; and there was the Aga's friendly acquaintance with David Kelly and his wife. Whenever the Aga visited Kelly, his wife bought out tea and sandwiches and the two men got on quite well together. The India Office decided that if the Aga's active loyalty was not conspicuous, his disloyalty was not proved. There the matter rested — for three more years when, after the war, British and American investigators began burrowing into secret German Foreign Office archives. The researchers unearthed the conversations that the Aga was supposed to have had with Hohenlohe, his reports to Hewel, and Hewel's replies. These were subsequently published as part of the series of *Documents on German foreign policy* in 1958. However, the researchers also came across a memorandum that had been addressed to von Woermann by the German official in Paris. That memorandum, to this day, has not been published. It did not contain the signature of the Aga but was attached to the letter that the German official in Paris had written to von Woermann and was meant to contain the views of the Aga. The memorandum also contained an additional final paragraph that had not been reported by the agent in Switzerland in 1942. This paragraph read:

> On the other hand, in sympathy with France, I have decided that if Laval asked me, through your intermediaries, I would help France. If the

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French Legion, or other French army joins the German troops in Syria, and if you give me ten or fifteen days' notice, I can organise an army of 30,000 Arabs plus my faithful disciples who will attack the Gaullists in the back.

On 25th September 1945, Oliver Harvey, a Foreign Office official wrote to Monteith at the India Office:

We have recently received from our representatives engaged in the study of these archives, a copy of the document, of which I am sending you a copy with this letter....

As you will see, the document is highly compromising to the Aga Khan. In fact, in our view, certain passages of it, if proved to have been written by him, constitute prima facie evidence of treasonable intent.

Harvey sent a copy of the letter, together with the enclosure, to Mr Newson at the Home Office, while asking the Foreign Office representatives in charge of the German archives in Germany to secure the microfilm copy of the original document and any further material available on the same subject.

On 27th September 1945, Newson replied to Harvey:

I feel that the document enclosed with your letter ought to be considered by the Director of Public Prosecutions as soon as possible, since if the Aga Khan wrote it and he is a British subject, as a British protected person it seems to afford prima facie evidence of treason. I am sending it to the Director of Public Prosecutions and I shall be grateful if you would let me have a photostat copy, and any further material which your representatives were able to secure. We will, of course, take no further action without consulting Monteith and yourself.

For Monteith and the India Office this document merely put down on paper what the agent in Switzerland had told them in 1942. The new element was the Aga's alleged offer of raising 30,000 fighting Arabs in Syria to help the Germans. There was one other, possibly corroborative, piece of information. Allied interrogators in Germany had been grilling those Indians who had joined Subhas Bose's Indian National Army, an army composed of Indian prisoners of war, organized to liberate India from British rule. Bose himself had travelled from Germany to Japan in 1943 to organize the much larger number of Indian prisoners captured by the Japanese after the fall of Singapore. His representative in Germany was A. C. Nambiar, and in the course of being interrogated by the allies, Nambiar told them that some time in August 1942 he was asked by the German Foreign Office about the Aga. The Germans had told Nambiar a German army officer was in contact with the Aga, and wanted to know how useful he would be as a contact. Nambiar declined to express an opinion. (The idea of Bose and the Aga working together for the Germans would be fantastic,

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given that they had very different ideas and life styles.) Did all this amount to treasonable evidence? The India Office were inclined to think not.

In Germany the search for more material went on. On 6th November 1945, Harvey wrote to Monteith that Colonel Thompson, the Foreign Office representative studying the German archives, had obtained a microfilm of the document. But this was not of much use, since the document was a copy of a report furnished by an agent in Switzerland.

The agent was a certain Heinrich Kleinschroth, a well-known German lawn tennis player. He had been working for the Abwehr, the German Intelligence Agency, in Paris. His particular speciality was the recruitment of agents for the agency. He had been arrested by the Americans in August 1945 and the India Office suggested that it would help if the Indian Security Unit, associated with the Twenty-First Army Unit, were to interrogate him. The idea was not so much to prosecute Kleinschroth as to enable the India Office to arrive at some conclusion with regard to the Aga's alleged memorandum.

By October 1945 the officers of the Indian Political Unit had managed to interrogate Kleinschroth. He claimed that the document was not genuine, in as much as it did not all come from the Aga Khan himself. According to Kleinschroth this was a second-hand report which had come to him through intermediaries — principally the ex-Khedive who had attributed certain views to the Aga Khan. Kleinschroth explained to the agent that 'it was his practice to express in the first person singular and in the appropriate language (ie French, German or other) such statements of views attributed to one person or another whether their substance reached him at first, second or third hand. It is clear, therefore, that the Aga Khan can in no way be held responsible for the opinions in this way put into his mouth, so to say; and indeed Kleinschroth admitted in the course of the interrogation that he might very well have attributed to the Aga Khan some observations or suggestions (in particular those appearing in the last paragraph of the document in question) which really originated from one or other intermediary.

As Monteith concluded:

> Even if the Aga Khan's authorship of the memorandum could be proved, it would have to be admitted that he took no steps to put his own proposals into operation. The alleged offer to provide 30,000 fighting Arabs in Syria was of course so utterly fantastic that it is difficult to believe that the Spiritual Head of the Khoja sect of Muslims made it seriously.... There is no need to expatiate on the disadvantages of launching a prosecution that failed; but even if the prospect of successful prosecution was better than it appears to be, is this a suitable time to launch a prosecution against a man who, whatever may be thought of him as an individual, is a recognised head of a sect of Muslims widely spread over various countries of Western Asia and East Africa and is a very prominent figure in the Muslim world, on the score of what he proposed to do, but did not do?

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A greater part of the memorandum had been communicated by an intermediary to Laval, Prime Minister in Vichy France. This had happened some time in August 1942. It is not clear which agent communicated this to Laval, though a few months earlier in a conversation with David Kelly, the Aga had lamented that he was not allowed to contact Pétain, Head of State of Vichy France.

On 24th October 1945, Monteith wrote to Harvey that no action could be taken against the Aga on the memorandum and 'there is nothing in this business which can really be held to the discredit of the Aga Khan; indeed, we know from much later information that the Aga Khan had a very poor opinion of the ex-Khedive who seems to have been Kleinschroth's main source of information — and made no secret of it.' It was decided to bury the whole affair and the documents were quietly filed away in the India Office and have remained hidden since.

It is difficult to form an historical view of this episode. It certainly made good political sense in 1945 not to prosecute the Aga for treason. The memorandum, as Monteith came to believe, may have been largely the work of the ex-Khedive but, curiously, when the Aga came to write his *Memoirs* a decade later, he had no criticism of the ex-Khedive to make. In fact, he almost went out of his way to try and exonerate the ex-Khedive of any anti-British feeling. This murky episode did lead to a break — but between the Aga and his wife. She may or may not have been involved with, as the British agent had put it, a 'notorious pro-Vichy agent', but the Aga was getting increasingly disenchanted with her. Probably the India Office suggested to him that it might be a good idea to disengage from Andrée, but whatever it was the relationship, already strained, now headed for a final break. Soon the Aga was to replace her with another French woman of a curiously similar background.

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Chapter 32

Wives and Mistresses

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The autumn of 1942 was the turning point of the war. The Russians stopped the Germans in the decisive battle of Stalingrad, Montgomery stopped Rommel in the Western Desert and began rolling the Germans back, and in the Far East the seemingly invincible Japanese army began to run out of steam. Perhaps, significantly, about this time too, reports of any Aga involvement with the Nazis died down. He may or may not have said what he is supposed to have said to Hohenlohe, he may or may not have promised to raise an army to Heinrich Kleinschroth. In the autumn of 1942 all such questionable events seemed in the past. The Aga occasionally spoke to British officials about post-war India — as for instance on 6th October 1942 when he visited the British Consul in Zurich and met a Mr E. J. Cabbie. He still saw the need to keep British troops in the country long after the war and was keen to impress Mr Cabbie with the work done by the princely states and their role in India. Otherwise his main concern — until the end of the war — would be to get Aly to come to India and to get the British to give him more money on which to live in Switzerland.

Aly was now working for the British Middle Eastern Command in Cairo, from where he was to be seconded for duties in Persia and Iraq. Just before he did, he and his wife decided to have a spot of leave — for five weeks — to visit their children who were living in East Africa. The Aly Khans left Cairo on 18th November 1942. The Aga saw this as a good opportunity to get Aly to visit India. A past master at orchestrating PR pressure he got his followers in 'Bombay and the suburbs' to telegraph the Secretary of State for India about the urgency and the need to have Aly Khan visit India as often as possible. And he followed this up with a telegram — on 12th December 1942 — to the Government of India. He was in bad health and could not travel, and his followers wanted to see Aly. He therefore requested:

> most respectfully that before my son takes up his duties in Iraq and Persia he may either be sent on an official mission to Bombay, New Delhi and Calcutta, or given a month's leave and the facilities to travel by air in order that he may spend one month with my followers in India. I feel that this visit is important from the point of view of my son's future utility and public service and I hope that it will have your approval.

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But this was a case of the Aga proposing and Aly disposing. The Government of India, of course, had no objection to Aly visiting India but they could not compel him. And Aly did not want to visit India. He was in the middle of his holidays — and could not get away from his children — and by just doing nothing made a visit to India in the winter of 1942/3 impossible.

Nor was the Aga having much luck with his health. He had suffered from a series of ailments, since the earache in the last few weeks of peace in August 1939, and doctors diagnosed that he had a cancerous growth near the eye and the eyelid which required a delicate operation. The operation was performed by a famous surgeon in Zurich but even after that he required almost continuous X-ray radium treatment. The medical expenses clearly had been very heavy and the Aga appears to have met them for two years from funds he had managed to squeeze out of the British. But by March 1943 there was very little fat left. On 4th March 1943 the Aga telegraphed the private secretary of the Viceroy:

> Respectfully beg your excellency graciously give permission as act of great favour my agents send me £2,000 in Swiss francs.... You graciously allow £400 monthly payments. This hardly enough, family, Indian staff, their family with greatest economy using trams, living on pension. Exchange rate terrible; 17 against 25. I would never trouble your excellency if I were not in debt. If your Excellency graciously allows this I promise never to trouble you again. I beg for early favourable reply.

The Viceroy was clearly touched by the Aga's pitiful telegram: a great man, one of the richest in the world, being forced to travel on Swiss trams. His finance department informed him that very strict control was being maintained with respect to Swiss francs and they could not advise sanction without the Secretary of State's permission. But Linlithgow thought that political considerations outweighed the financial ones and felt that the Aga was due one final kindness for the duration of the war.

The India Office was, predictably, more hard headed. The Aga's monthly allowance of £400 was already forty times the monthly allowance of £10 per month of an ordinary person. It would be a lump sum, a once and for all payment and most officials agreed with M. C. Clauson, who minuted on 13th March 1943 that it was worth paying £2,000 to the Aga to avoid the disadvantages that might arise from refusal, particularly when the refusal became known. However, just as the decision was being taken, London received a request from the British Consul General in Antananarivo, a French territory where the Aga's followers wanted to remit 500,000 francs to the Aga's account in London, and possibly 50,000 francs per month after that. The French were reluctant and India Office squashed the proposal.

The Aga, however, was grateful to Linlithgow for what he had done and, for the first time since the war began, had begun to feel expansive. In May 1943 the Aga approached the British Consul in Geneva and offered to place at the King's disposal all his winnings on the turf in the 1943 racing season,

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minus 25% to be paid to his staff. The King could distribute the winnings either to charities connected with the Indian army, or treat it as a contribution from India towards the general expenses of the war. It should have been a nice gesture but the protocol conscious India Office saw it as an Aga move to circumvent the established procedure for Indian princes to contribute to the war effort. The right way for the Aga to go about it would have been to send donations to the Viceroy for the War Purposes Fund. But this did not dampen the Aga's enthusiasm and he was just as keen to contribute part of the winnings of the 1944 season.

But if the Aga had Linlithgow to thank for easing his financial worries, there seemed no relief to the problem of Aly. Far from managing to get him to India, a highly damaging divorce action now threatened Aly and the family. To all outward appearances Aly and Joan were the sort of Cairo couple everybody wanted to know. Their flat in Cairo had become the centre of a thriving social group which included the photographer Cecil Beaton, the writer Freya Stark, the soldier and politician-to-be Julian Amery, son of Leo Amery — and most English visitors to Cairo. Aly was a flamboyant man, Joan a sensible English women whom even Evelyn Waugh could not find fault with. Cairo, it is true, abounded with stories of Aly and his women: Christine Granville, the slim dark-haired Greta Garbo look-alike, or the twenty-one year old Sybilla Szczeniowska, the blonde wife of a Polish diplomat. Aly was seen in the company of both and, when his will was read in 1960 it was discovered that Aly had left $14,000 to Mrs Szczeniowska, and $56,000 to her son Marek. While delicious gossip spun many a good tale around Aly and these women, Aly and Joan were still seen as a good couple. Joan's sensible practical ways seemed to match Aly's flamboyance, and as one Englishman who knew them in Cairo put it later: 'Joan seemed just right for Aly. After his romances he would come back to her and she would be the good nanny and look after him.' But now, in March 1944, the Aly-nanny relationship seemed to be teetering on the brink of a major scandal.

For some time Aly had been friendly with Noel Rees from Alexandria. Mrs Rees, a Russian by birth, was extremely pretty and soon Noel Rees had no doubts that Aly was being more than just a good friend to his wife. He had him followed closely and decided that the only honourable course was divorce.

On the last Sunday of March 1944, Aly met John Besly, legal councillor at the British Embassy in Cairo. He told Besly that Noel Rees was about to file a petition of divorce against his wife, citing Aly as co-respondent. Aly protested his innocence to Besly. Besly was in a difficult position. Should Rees actually file a petition, Besly would have to judge it. Like everybody else in Cairo, he had heard of Aly's reputation and he did not quite believe his story. He advised him to get hold of the best lawyer in Egypt, who happened to be Mr Sims-Marshal. Aly the man was not a problem, but as both Besly and Sims-Marshal recognized, the real problem was Aly's status as a religious political figure. Aly himself was terrified of the effect an action for adultery against him would have on what he called 'his people', and on his father.

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A few days after Aly met Besly, Joan called on him. She was not, of course, involved in Noel Rees's proposed action, and any divorce proceedings between her and Aly would not come up before John Besly. But Besly received a distinct impression that Joan was not convinced of Aly's innocence. However, what worried her was not that he had been unfaithful, but 'her own financial position. Apparently, he gives her nothing, or next to nothing, the children very little and squanders his money wildly on gambling and female friends. She is also very concerned with the possible success of the Rees divorce case on his position with his people and with his father.' Besly advised her to try and obtain some definite financial status, and if Aly was not helpful, to take the whole matter before the Aga for whom Joan had great respect.

Besly, while informing the British Ambassador in Cairo, Lord Killearn, about this, speculated about the effects of an open court hearing of the Noel Rees petition. Censorship might stop the newspapers from reporting the court case, but leakages could not be stopped. And Besly wondered whether political considerations might not make it necessary to bring pressure on Rees to drop the whole case.

For Lord Killearn the case came at a particularly trying moment. The Aga had been using him as a post office to convey messages to Aly and he was getting pretty tired of this role. Nor did he like the complications of the Aly-Joan relationship: 'Just what they are at the moment I cannot say,' he wrote to Anthony Eden, 'for they have most puzzling ups and downs. But I do know (through censorship sources — and therefore on no account quotable) (a) that not long ago she felt that she could not stand it much longer; and (b) that only a week ago *Aly* had a telegram from the Aga advising him "to be patient for the time being".'

He now telegraphed London to find out if there were any political considerations that made it necessary for him to intervene and stop the case. The ambassador's request did the rounds of the Foreign Office, the India Office and the Viceroy in India. Wavell, who had succeeded Linlithgow as Viceroy, did not think that the matter called for any intervention, although the India Office did toy with the possibility of getting Aly transferred from the Middle East command. But this only raised the old problem of what to do with Aly: does he come back to England? Is he placed with GHQ in Delhi?

As it happened, the affair sorted itself out. Noel Rees, having entered the petition for divorce, withdrew it. Lord Killearn, who had not applied any pressure, thought the matter may have been disposed of out of court.

But Aly's relief at keeping the Rees affair secret, not only from the world, but from his father, must have been tinged with envy. Just as Besly and Killearn were busily racking their brains about preventing a damaging divorce action concerning Aly, the Aga was himself getting divorced — in the most public fashion. A few months later the Aga married — for the fourth time — and Aly must have wondered at how his father seemed to have acquired the knack of changing wives better than he had.

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It was hardly a surprise, of course, when in March 1944, the Aga divorced

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Andrée. As we have seen, their relationship had been creaking for some time and the Aga had known a likely replacement for almost six years. 'Replacement' is perhaps not as inappropriate as it may sound. For Yvette Blanche Lebrusse was, in many ways, similar in origins to Andrée Carron and Theresa Magliano. Yvette was born of humble origins, the daughter of a tram conductor in the Mediterranean port of Sete, west of Marseilles.

When Yvette was a few months old, the family moved to Cannes and she grew up in a flat in the rue d'Antibes, whose windows overlooked the hills of Le Cannet. Then humble Yvette, growing up in circumstances she would later despise, would hardly have imagined that one day she would own a villa, one of the most magnificent villas in Cannes, overlooking the same hill. The Lebrusse family moved to Lyon, and Yvette became assistant to her mother who ran a dressmaking shop. Cannes and the Riviera beckoned her, and escape came literally because of her size. She was well over six feet tall and with a body to match the height. In 1930 she entered a beauty contest in Lyon and easily became Miss Lyon. Next followed Miss France and then a trip to Rio de Janeiro for the Miss World contest. She did not win that, but the contest had demonstrated to her one great truth about life; that it mattered how you look. Looks may not be everything, but the first look counted for a lot.

In 1938 she was holidaying with her parents in the Mena House Hotel in the shadow of the Pyramids just outside Cairo. There she met the Aga. He was sixty, almost twice Yvette's age, but he was quite bowled over by her stature. For her, as it had been for Theresa and Andrée, the Aga was a legend. Though the Aga was still married to Andrée, Muslim law allowed him four wives; in any case, as the leader of a religious sect he could make his own laws. He could not very well introduce Yvette to Villa Jane-Andrée, though she became part of his entourage and he decided to fulfil her childhood dream and build a house for her overlooking the hills at Le Cannet. There, in the California suburb of Cannes with its winding roads and away-from-the-hoi-polloi feel, the Aga built a twenty-one room villa in rue Victoria and called it Yakimour, combining Yvette and his name with the French word for love, amour. It was later described by Viscountess Astor, the second wife of Bill Astor, Aly's great friend, as a 'Peter Jones department store of a building, built for comfort and coolness, but jolly hot.' What Andrée Carron made of these arrangements we do not know; in any case, by then their marriage was at zero. The war, as we have seen, killed it off and on 9th October 1944, the Aga made Yvette his fourth wife according to Western law.

Madeleine Masson, (whose mother Jane had given the Aga the nickname Inky as a child, received many presents from the Aga and, as a young woman, money to play at the roulette table,) has speculated that the Aga 'married French women because they were cosy. Yes, he married below him, but I do not think he reckoned women except as bedmates.' None of Aga's friends was able satisfactorily to explain why the Aga married as he did. For a man who valued rank and position so much in life he seemed not to have cared about the social origins of his wives. The marriages may also

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have been seen by him as part of the egalitarianism of Islam that he publicly championed. Yvette, of course, unlike Andrée, became a Muslim almost as soon as her Muslim marriage to the Aga in Cairo. In later years she would acquire some of the characteristics of the tiresome convert, much to the annoyance of members of the Khan family. But this must have made a pleasing change from the previous wives of the Aga who had steadfastly refused to be converted. For a Muslim religious leader to marry a non-Muslim and not be able to convert her to the faith was not a mark of distinction.

Maybe it was this, maybe it was his advancing age, but almost from the beginning Yvette played a much more active part in the Aga's life than had Andrée or, of course, Theresa. In the past the Aga had rarely been accompanied by his wife on social occasions. Now, he was almost invariably accompanied by Yvette.

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Chapter 33

A Flight for the Aga

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The war was ending. On 6th June 1944, the Allied troops landed in Normandy, D-Day, and by August Paris had been liberated and the Aga's thoughts were increasingly turning to what would happen when it ended.

His first concern was his villa, Jane-Andrée, at Antibes. This had valuable possessions; rugs, tapestries, *objets d'art* of great value, and the Aga was afraid that during that awkward period between the removal of the Germans and the re-introduction of French civilian police, 'irresponsible elements' might loot the place. In August 1944, the Aga approached David Kelly in Berne and asked him to request his old friend, Sir James Grigg, now at the War Office, to help police his villa. Sir James was somewhat surprised to receive the message. He had only the slightest acquaintance with the Aga, was certainly not a very great friend and did not feel that he could ask for any preferential treatment. Neither the Aga, nor Sir James, need have worried about the villa. A month later, on 9th September 1944, when a civil affairs officer of the Seventh Army, accompanied by the Swiss Vice-Consul, visited the Aga's villa, they found that it had been well looked after by Kitty Breant, who described herself as a secretary of the 'Princess, a maid and a guard.' The only damage to the villa had been a few slight cracks on the plaster and a broken plate glass door in one of the bedrooms; for which neither the Germans nor 'irresponsible elements' could be blamed.

Inevitably, the Aga's request arrived at the India Office where officials were already wondering what the Aga's post-war plans were. For some time they had been receiving the request from his followers in East Africa to allow special facilities to the Aga and his family to visit that part of the world and perform 'long awaited, most sacred religious ceremonies.' Along with this request had appeared a well-orchestrated campaign, with the India Office receiving telegrams from almost every conceivable Ismaili organization and, though the messages did not specify this, August 1945 would mark the sixtieth year of his rule and he seemed to have decided to celebrate it in some style. Possibly the Aga had suggested to his followers that they telegraph the India Office directly — rather than make the request himself. It was the sort of circuitous behaviour that old India hands call 'typically Indian'. But it left the India Office in an awkward situation; they

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could hardly ask unless they heard from the Aga, and to ask him might precipitate even further problems.

The Aga, of course, wanted to go to East Africa but, before that, he wanted to meet Aly and travel through France on an extraordinary mission of 'search'.

Meeting Aly should have been simple. Aly had actually arrived in Europe and was serving with Allied Forces in Italy. But the Aga had failed to establish contact with his son and requested Amery to help out. In September, when Amery visited Italy, he asked General Maitland Wilson, the British Commanding General, to help Aly get to Switzerland. The Aga, understandably, was getting anxious and in November twice visited the British Consul at Berne to express his anxiety. After the last visit — on 22nd November 1944 — Mr Naughton from the Consulate checked with the Swiss authorities and found that Aly had actually been given a visa in early October, but had not used it. It was only when the Aga himself arranged matters with the Swiss authorities — all he had to do was present himself, in civilian dress, to the Swiss passport office at the frontier at Annemasse — that Aly finally arrived, some time in early December 1944.

Delays were probably inevitable in war-time Europe, but Aly was clearly not rushing to meet his father. As we have seen, much had happened since they had last met — nearly five years before — and the prospect of meeting Yvette was not exactly thrilling. The Aga's fourth marriage was not as traumatic as the previous one. Then Aly, a tender nineteen-year-old, had reacted with hurt and bewilderment to what he saw as a sacrilege to the memory of a loving mother. Aly, of course, had met Yvette in his father's pre-war entourage and the two had not exactly hit it off. Yvette's new status did not change this mutual dislike.

Father and son did agree on one thing: the need to search for the Aga's properties which had been lost during the war. Aly was given the task of finding the horses that the Nazis had taken. With the help of General Wilson, Aly was seconded to the staff of General Jacob L. Devers, Commanding Officer with the American Sixth Army, then sweeping through the South of France. His mission was general — accounting for the half a million dollars' worth of horses the Germans were said to have captured — but of course there was the specific interest of the Aga's horses. It was after V-Day, in May 1945, that he actually recovered his father's horses with the help of Robert Muller, who had been assistant manager at the Aga's French stables. While Muller found stables in Metz, Aly sped into Germany, driving a jeep hitched to a makeshift horse van. The search took him to many parts of Germany, including Heidelberg and Berchtesgaden; as he later told Emrys Williams, he found no less than twenty of the Aga's mares in one field, and also the 1936 Derby winner, Mahmoud. Working with the American Sixth Army also had other compensations, and Aly won a medal. It meant landing with the Americans in Cannes and then St Tropez and sweeping through that part of France which had been his natural stamping ground, and where he would still chalk up important social victories. His knowledge of French and of France, particularly the south,

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smoothed out a number of wrinkles for the Americans and later the Sixth Army group would award Aly the Bronze Star, the citation mentioning his 'tireless energy and marked industry and constant willingness to undertake any task regardless of its hazards or its irksomeness.'

By then the Aga's other search had also gone well. When he had fled from the advancing Germans back in 1940, as he told Amery later, his servants had hidden valuables, including decorations, all over the place in the South of France. These servants were now dead and, in the autumn of 1944, the Aga conceived a plan for either himself or his Indian secretary to travel with a military escort to France to search for these valuables. The request should have indicated that the Aga was recovering some of his old form and zest, and for a time the India Office, the French authorities, and even Duff Cooper, the British Ambassador in Paris, were all involved in trying to work out how the Aga, or his Indian secretary, could be allowed to take such an expedition while the lesser matter of the war was concluded. Amery, keen to please the Aga, championed his cause energetically and by October even SHAEF had given in. The Aga, his family and entourage were provided with a military permit and petrol to cross France in a convoy of cars in order to search for these valuables. As things turned out, the journey proved unnecessary; the valuable decorations were found — we don't quite know how or by whom — and SHAEF could return to its other, more public, concerns.

A flight for the Aga out of Europe was rather more difficult. The Aga wanted to be transported to Cairo in a large aircraft that would take himself, his wife, her maid, two Indian attendants and a considerable amount of luggage. The Air Ministry was so horrified that in an official note to the India Office, they minuted that they had reacted 'very unfavourably to this suggestion.' Sir Archibald Sinclair, the Air Minister, wrote to Amery on 4th November 1944, 'the ear-marking of the special aircraft for the Aga Khan might, I think, cause considerable comment. I appreciate the political reasons for doing what we can to help him, but I should have thought that it would have been far better to go by ship, especially as he will have a lot of luggage with him.' The Aga did not plan to leave Switzerland until February 1945 — so what was the hurry?

The Aga was willing to accept sea passages for his two Indian staff and the baggage, but for himself and Yvette he wanted some form of air transport, even if it meant sharing with officers going to Egypt, or any ordinary military transport. The operation he had had in Zurich for a cancerous growth near the eye made a sea voyage impossible. He wrote to Amery on 7th December 1944, 'Wind is to be avoided like poison. Here I live at places like Montreux. A sea voyage in winter or spring is quite risky and I can get a medical certificate to that effect.'

Valid as this was, the Aga seemed unable to appreciate what the war had done to the world. Foreign exchange restrictions may have forced him to travel on Swiss trams; neutral Switzerland had also shielded him from the horrors of the war — and its total nature. As the Air Ministry had observed when the Aga's initial request had arrived, the war with Germany was still going on. Even after victory arrived, only travel of the highest priority

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could be considered. But to the Aga, with the South of France back in French hands, the world had returned to pre-3rd September 1939. For the next few months the India Office, the Air Ministry and SHAEF Headquarters were to encounter a whole series of requests for travel from the Aga that varied from the bizarre to the ludicrous. A week after the Aga had accepted sea passages for his two Indian servants, on 17th December 1944, he asked for an additional one for his wife's maid. Meanwhile, the Aga's personal secretary, Mr Bundali, had applied to SHAEF for facilities to travel from Geneva to Nice via Chambéry and Grenoble. SHAEF did not know who Bundali was, or why he had to travel. Finally, through Duff Cooper in Paris and the Foreign Office in London, the Aga clarified that Bundali had to travel because he was carrying the Aga's considerable wardrobe, scattered over various places in France. Even as this was being sorted out, the Government of India were taken aback by an enquiry from the American Mission in Delhi whether they had any objection to Aly Khan paying a visit for ten days to Karachi and Bombay. The idea, it seems, had come from General Eisenhower's headquarters, and Aly was to be flown to and from India in an American aircraft. The British, who could be quite possessive of the Aga and his family, were most upset by what they considered a very inappropriate request. That mystery was never solved, nor did Aly make the journey, but the final straw was the Aga's letter of 22nd January 1945.

The Air Priorities Board had arranged for an aircraft for the Aga at Istres, near Marseilles. In his letter the Aga proposed to travel there from Annemasse, via Chambéry, Montélimar, Avignon, in two cars which would contain himself, his wife, his valet, an Indian called Ranbir Singh, and a dog. So far the Air Ministry had borne with some patience the considerable amount of correspondence, letters and telegrams regarding the Aga's travel plans. But this was the last straw, and J. J. W. Herbertson wrote to W. L. M. Dunlop at the Foreign Office, 'I am writing this because in a copy of a telegram from the Foreign Office to Geneva there is some mention of a Sir Maharaj Singh who has somehow or the other come into the picture. Our offer was to take the Aga Khan and his wife, not any of his stray friends. Do you happen to know anything about this newcomer and do the Foreign Office sponsor him?'

Herbertson was being rather harsh on the Aga. The 'stray friend' was not Sir Maharaj Singh but his son Ranbir Singh, and this was really the idea of Leo Amery. Amery and Maharaj were old Balliol contemporaries and Maharaj had requested Amery to help Ranbir, who had been living in Switzerland since 1939 hoping to cure his TB, to return to India. Nor was Ranbir due to take the flight, merely share the car journey to Marseilles. In the event, doctors advised Ranbir against travelling, but the Aga did not improve matters by immediately requesting a French armed guard to take his place in the convoy. And as far as the dog was concerned, the Air Ministry, as the India Office noted 'with some justification, declined to pronounce on the question.... The Aga will have to do what he can when he gets to the airfield.'

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We can now picture the Aga's first journey out of Switzerland since June 1940. On the morning of 7th February 1945, the Aga, Yvette and her maid, boarded one of the two cars that comprised the convoy. The Aga had originally made his request for air transport back in September 1944 and had promised Amery he would travel with only small hand luggage. But that morning in Geneva, Mr Armstrong of the British Embassy estimated that the Aga's total luggage weighed six tons, including twenty heavy trunks, three very large cases and eight other cases of normal size. Apart from a possible guard of honour at Geneva, the journey — given the war-time conditions — lacked nothing in splendour. The convoy proceeded via Peroy and Saint Julien, where at the Aga's insistence the French had provided an armed escort to Aix-les-Bains and then Avignon. The next day they arrived at Cannes via Frejus. On the 9th they returned to Martigues to allow the Aga and Yvette to spend the night there. The next morning they left for Istres where the Aga flew out on Saturday 10th February. It is not clear if the dog made the flight, but five days after the Aga left Marseilles, Mr Solomon Bundali also left by air — with 5,000 pounds of freight containing the Aga's wardrobe and other possessions.

Just before he left Switzerland, the Aga had met Kelly in Zurich and outlined his plans for India. He arrived in Cairo on the 12th and immediately telegraphed Amery that 'this season, like formerly, I am giving winnings on turf to the Viceroy Soldiers Fund. Kindly ask Advocate-General receive amount.' Some of that old vigour and bounce that, apparently, had been ruined by travel in Swiss trams was now returning.

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BOOK FIVE

THE NEW WORLD

(1945 – 1960)

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Chapter 34

The Diamond Hour

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According to the Aga's plan for post-war India, as he had told Kelly at their meeting in Zurich in January 1945, a contact of his had prepared the groundwork to bring Gandhi and Jinnah together. To them the Aga would present plans to divide India into eight or nine independent dominions federating together in a loose empire with its capital possibly at Delhi. One dominion would be Pakistan — with West Pakistan divided from East Pakistan by a large swathe of Indian territory. The Western portion of Pakistan would form a close association with countries such as Afghanistan and Persia; the Eastern portion with Muslim Malayan states. The central part of India, predominantly Hindu, would be divided into three dominions: North, Central and South, and the princely Indian states — one third of India — would form into regional groups clustered round particularly large princely states: Rajputana in the north, Hyderabad in the centre and three or four states in the south. Ceylon might possibly come into the scheme as a dominion on its own. Dominions would send representatives to Delhi, there would be free trade amongst them, and the foreign and economic policy of the whole Indian Empire would be the most attractive feature of this plan, for Kelly and the British, as Britain would have considerable influence in India for many years : its troops would remain in the country, British officers would train the Indian Army, there would be British air and naval bases, British goods would have preference over all other foreign goods, and Indians 'would be happy and proud' that the King remained Emperor of India. Though these ideas were an advance on his pre-war ideas, the Aga was still convinced that many of the Indian politicians, who were loud in their demands for independence, did not actually mean it, 'all of a sneaking fear that alone they would not be able to keep order, and they would therefore be grateful for British collaboration for the purpose, provided the arrangements were consistent with their aspirations for nominal independence.'

Some of this was undoubtedly what the Aga felt should happen and, invariably, he had always presented a rosier picture of the Raj to British officials, almost as if this is what they wanted to hear. He was on surer ground when he told friends in Cairo, and the press, that 'India was in what you would call a blind alley politically.' Congress's anti-British war

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campaign had only meant repression and imprisonment and even if Jinnah, by working closely with the British, had immeasurably improved the Muslim League position, the Indian Empire seemed insoluble. For many Indians — particularly nationalists — who, at best, had been lukewarm in their support for Britain during the war, now felt that victorious Britain had little or no reason to grant India independence. The Aga was not alone in thinking that India had to remain a British dependency for some years still, even if a plan to create eight or nine dominions, had it become known, would have horrified most Indians.

As a self-chosen exile in Switzerland, he may have alienated himself from Indian opinion, but his skill as a PR man was still undimmed. No sooner had he arrived in Cairo than there were stories about his plans for India — without any details — and on 21st February 1945, *The Times* Lucknow correspondent put it that the Aga was shortly to visit the city to organize a Hindu-Muslim Round Table Conference. But from Egypt the Aga headed not for India — but further into Africa: first East, then South. This was not as curious as it sounds — there was good Aga logic to it. For almost a decade — ever since the Government of India Act of 1935 and the elections that followed — the Aga had had no major political role in India, and for the five years of his Swiss exile, hardly a mention in the Indian press. Though he had once advised the readers of *The Times* that India was not all about Maharajas atop elephants in gaudy processions, he was well aware of the Indian liking for ceremonials. And, conveniently, there was an occasion which could re-enact some of the spectacle and story of his 1936 jubilee celebration.

The 18th August 1945 would be exactly sixty years to the date that he assumed the Imamate. He had been weighed in gold once, now he felt it was the turn of the diamond merchants, many of his followers being both gold and diamond merchants. Though the war in Japan was not over and was likely to continue for a long time — and the war in Europe was dying but not yet dead, the Aga felt confident that a diamond jubilee celebration could be easily arranged in India and East Africa. His trip to Africa was to explore the diamond connection. The same month his followers in Tanganyika had formed an investment trust with a capital of £1 million. The Aga subscribed £250,000 in war bonds, with the promise that the proceeds of his diamond jubilee would be added to the trust capital at nominal interest. Shareholders were to be Ismailis, though the operations — savings or investment banking — were to be open to all.

Even before he had travelled there, he had requested and obtained special passages for a couple of his hand-picked followers to journey from Bombay to East Africa.

On 28th August, 1945, the Commerce Department of the Government of India telegraphed the Secretary of State for India that an organization called the Aga Khan Legion wanted to borrow industrial diamonds of 600,000 carats. The Legion's representative had interviewed Sir Ernest Oppenheim, President of the Diamond Corporation, who had told them that sufficient stock to cover the proposed loan had been transferred to

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Canada as a reserve under the British Ministry of Supply. The plan was that the Aga Khan Legion would deposit the full value of the 600,000 carats of industrial diamonds with any bank approved by the British Government and pay the costs of transporting both the diamonds and the accompanying detectives. The ceremony could be arranged at any date convenient and the diamonds would be required in India for only a few days.

The India Office had to obtain Treasury permission for this, and they pointed out that although stocks of industrial diamonds established in Canada were under the joint agreement of the Governments of the United States and Canada, withdrawal would mean negotiations with the US and Canadian Governments for amendment of the agreement. The Ministry of Supply was not particularly keen and advised the Viceroy to turn the Aga's plan regretfully down. But now the Aga's men came up with an alternative idea. They suggested the supply of the 600,000 carats be arranged from the Belgian Congo. According to their information, a monthly consignment of about 700,000 carats was air despatched to London by Forminière Company under an arrangement with the British Government. The Legion suggested the plane carrying one month's consignment should be diverted to Bombay from where it would proceed to London, after the diamond jubilee ceremony. The diversion would be paid for by the Aga Khan Legion.

The Aga had originally planned to go from East Africa to India but officials there convinced him that with the war with Japan still on, it would be not only difficult to hold the celebrations near 18th August but virtually impossible. The Aga decided to postpone the celebrations by six months.

On 15th November 1945, the officials met Mr Eboo who described himself as 'minister' to the Aga. He sketched out a few more details of the diamond jubilee celebrations. There were to be two of them — one in Bombay at the end of December 1945, or in March 1946, and the other in Dar-es-Salaam at the end of July 1946. The diamonds for the Bombay ceremony were still under discussion, but Eboo was confident that the ones for Dar-es-Salaam could, as suggested, be obtained from the Belgian Congo.

The Aga arrived in Bombay in February 1946, accompanied by his family. There was no doubt who was the centre of attraction: Yvette. Whilst in Cairo, the Aga and Yvette had had dinner with Ronald Storrs. Afterwards, Storrs had noted in his diary that while the Aga was as gracious and attractive as ever, his latest French wife was 'tall, uncharming'; and a friend had assured him that whereas she had 'all the right measurements, but [was] deadly', the Aga did not look as happy as in the past. Andrée may have called herself Princess, but as the Aga had reassured Colonel Patterson back in 1929, she was not pushy. Yvette, who had become a Muslim, preferred to call herself Begum and at the jubilee gave observers the distinct feeling that she wanted to be as much part of the ceremony as the Aga himself. At the ceremony she was the centre of all eyes in a flimsy white sari, embroidered with three hundred diamonds and worth, according to one estimate, $180,000. And, significantly, in the most widely publicized photograph of the ceremony — and the one used by the Aga in his *Memoirs* — it showed the Aga, Yvette and Sadruddin, but not Aly.

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The ceremony was held not, as in 1936, in congested Mazagoan but in the heart of modern Bombay in the brand-new Braborne Stadium which was just becoming famous as India's great cricket centre. The stadium, separated from the Arabian Sea by Bombay's picturesque Marine Drive, would in time become a unique cricket stadium — the only one in the world where players could both play cricket and use the pavilion as a hotel. But even the cricket deeds that were to make it famous in the years to come probably did not match the Aga's single innings there on that March Sunday.

The timing of the ceremony depended on when the diamonds arrived in Bombay. They followed a complicated route. The bag stuffed with the diamonds were first ferried by the Naval Transport *Derbyshire* to the BOAC flying boat for onward dispatch. It is not clear when or how the diamonds were loaded onto the flying boat, but some time after the diamond jubilee celebrations the India Office received a claim of £1 from the Basra Consulate-General in respect of 'taxi hire in connection with the shipment of diamonds for the Aga Khan.' Comically, the taxi amount and its absurdity bobbed about in the India Office and it was only in June 1947 that the item was included as a debit in the current account.

Later, rumours would sweep the Bombay Khoja community that while the Aga waited for the diamonds to arrive, he gorged himself in order to increase his weight: just before the weighing he ate twelve whole chickens and drank such large quantities of water that just after the weighing he was sick. Whatever it was, he arrived at the stadium, wearing a long silver brocaded tunic, with a tight-fitting collar and a gold brocaded green silk turban, just as the diamonds reached Bombay airport.

The stadium was filled with as varied a collection of crowds as any that had been seen in India, ranging from the Indian rich to the somewhat poorer followers of the Aga. Over 50,000 of his followers had come from all over India, some from abroad, and Bombay's various *maidans* — central areas of greenery — had sprouted camps to accommodate these people. The stadium itself packed in 70,000 people, among them fourteen Ruling Princes and the consular representatives of several Near Eastern countries.

At the centre of the stadium there had been erected a teakwood dais. The dais contained only one chair, which was attached to a scale with a white dial indicator. Serenaded by a band and flanked by his chosen Ismailis, the Aga proceeded to the dais. Then after acknowledging the greetings of the crowd, he mounted it to triumphant shouts of 'Aga Khan Zindabad' — 'long live the Aga Khan'. There was a short welcome address and then the Aga sat in the chair. Slowly, diamonds in plastic boxes, each weighing about six pounds, were deposited upon the scales. Round them the various bands and bagpipes blared out Western tunes. They were not always in unison and if one band was playing 'Sympathy', another was playing 'Donkey Serenade'. Waiters in white uniforms scurried about offering sweets and drinks and coffee to the principal guests and dignitaries. Slowly the diamonds approached the Aga's weight. Finally it was announced that the Aga weighed 243½ pounds. (See illustration, page 235.) Industrial

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diamonds valued at £440,000 and brilliants valued at £200,000 had been used to match that figure. Indian Khojas had subscribed about seventy lakhs of rupees and this would form the nucleus of a fund which was expected to total a crore of rupees (£750,000). The Aga thanked his 'spiritual children' for the gifts and later Mr M.H. Fazalbhoy, President of the Aga Khan Legion, announced that the money placed in trust would be used for the economic and educational advancement of the Ismaili community in India. Much was made of the fact that not a penny of this went into the Aga's pockets. This was probably true, though the trust acted as a bank providing cheap loans for the Khojas with the Aga, like a shrewd money lender, getting a cut. But there was no doubt of the standing of the Aga within his community, or that compared to 1936 the 1946 jubilee had managed to attract almost thirty times the amount.

Soon after his arrival in Bombay the Aga had spoken of bringing about a compromise between the Congress and the Muslim League and his plans to meet Gandhi. The idea which he had broached to Kelly — over a year before — still seemed current. The situation in India should have disabused him of these notions. The divide between the Congress and the Muslim League — as was to become evident within a year — was almost unbridgeable, and in India itself, an Indian revolutionary situation prevailed. The numbers of the officers who had joined the Subhas Bose-inspired Indian National Army threatened the Raj's central pillar of support, the Indian Army. There had been further mutinies in other branches of the Indian Army, and even as the Aga arrived in Bombay virtually the entire Indian Navy in Karachi and Bombay mutinied and offered themselves to the Indian Nationalist leaders . Woodrow Wyatt, a member of the British parliamentary delegation which visited India about then, had no doubts that unless Britain acted — and decisively — British India would slide into anarchy and chaos. But as the Aga returned to Europe, by way of Cairo, he was still full of optimism about Britain's role in India.

On 20th May 1946 Sir Ronald Campbell, British Ambassador in Cairo, telegraphed the Foreign Office a note of 'particular secrecy', conveying the Aga's view of the Indian situation. Contrary to most other correspondents, the Aga was very optimistic about India and Britain's future there. He told Campbell:

> he had never known British prestige stand so high as it did today in that country. We had more friends than ever in his recollection both among Hindus and Moslems. India of course would need for twenty years British advisers and guiders as well as assistance in defence and higher technical undertakings.

Yet when the Aga came to write his memoirs in 1954, his recollection of his Indian visit in 1946 was very different. In 1954 he would write 'that sense of spiritual unity and of continuity which in my youth and long before had sustained British rule in India, had given it its moral fibre and backbone as

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well as its outward manifestations of efficiency and thoroughness were now finally sapped.... In India there was no talk now of a five — or ten — year period of transition, the struggle would be real, immediate and bloody unless self government were granted, not in the future and on terms laid down by Britain, but at once and on conditions largely imposed by the people of India themselves.'

Of course, memory plays tricks and the Aga of 1954 may have forgotten what he told Sir Ronald Campbell in 1946. Or, as often happens, what had actually happened seemed in retrospect inevitable. Whatever the reason for this astonishing discrepancy, it is worth stressing the contemporary record of what the Aga said then. A popular revisionist school has developed which has tried to convince us that in 1946 the British had accepted that the Indian Empire was over; that those who had been Britain's loyalists also accepted this. A confidential Foreign Office telegram about the Aga indicates that at least one loyalist at that time did not think so.

The Aga's chat with Campbell also covered his views on the Muslim world and this showed that they had not changed much since the days before the First World War. He saw Britain as still the most influential power in the Muslim world with a belt of Muslim states from Morocco to Afghanistan which would either be children of the British, like the Dominions, or 'foster children' like Egypt. His parting shot was about Palestine, and must have reminded Foreign Office officials of the pre-war days when the Aga's pronouncements sent telegrams whizzing from Sir Miles Lampson and Sir Percy Lorraine. Palestine's view — which he repeated to Lord Stansgate and the Oriental Minister at the British Embassy — was that an alternative to stopping Jewish immigration was to develop Arabs so that they could match the Jews and, the Aga felt, it could be done for a mere £20,000.

Perhaps the Aga did not have much faith that his ideas could bear political fruit. For while the moderate Indian nationalists calmed the potential Indian revolutionaries down, and prepared to inherit the mantle of the Raj, the Aga spent a month's Cannes holiday in Yakimour and then set out to complete the second leg of his jubilee celebrations. On 3rd June he arrived in Nairobi and the same day flew to Madagascar. Madagascar was French and did not much care for the Aga and there was much doubt about how the visit might go. And as John Grant, the British Consul General in Antanimora, reported to the Foreign Office:

> Prior to Their Highnesses' arrival, the prospects for their visit to Madagascar did not look too bright. A new Governor General had just arrived bearing with him an old-established prejudice against the Indian colony of the Island which he had acquired during his tenure of office. This prejudice was likewise shared by all the French inhabitants who had in addition been engrossed in the days immediately preceding the Aga Khan's arrival in the local elections to the Constituent Assembly, and therefore had no time to devote to considerations of the forthcoming visit which meant little or nothing to them. In addition there existed a

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sharp division among the local Aga Khanists themselves as to which of their numbers should speak for their community during the course of the visit. It was therefore in an atmosphere of gloom that our small contingent of courier consuls set out to greet the Aga Khan and his consort at the Tananarive Airport, where large crowds of Indians had assembled along with a sprinkling of Europeans led by a Junior Administrator representing the Governor General. However, as soon as the party landed, the atmosphere was immediately transformed to one of warm cordiality due to the exuberance of the Aga Khan and to the irresistible and young and fascinating Begum, both of whom from then onwards imposed themselves upon the population as much as upon their own religious followers .

John Grant was so taken by the Aga's visit that he thought that even the King's birthday, which broke into this round of festivity, was distinguished by the presence of the Aga and his wife. And while only 20% of the 10,000 Indians were Aga followers, they collected ten million Madagascar francs, and gathered in their hundreds to bid him farewell.

The celebrations continued in Dar-es-Salaam where the Aga was weighed in diamonds on 10th August. They were attended by the Governor of Tanganyika, his wife and the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, Mr Creech Jones. The Aga's weight was found to be half a pound less than in Bombay a few months earlier — 243 pounds, representing a value in diamonds of £350,000. As in Bombay a few months earlier, the diamonds were on loan from the British Board of Trade. It was the value of the diamonds that would form part of the trust fund to be set up for the community. There were two hitches before the actual weighing took place. A few days before the ceremony, the Aga, whose health had been causing concern to his doctors and to the Begum, developed pneumonia and a British doctor, Dr Guy Johnson, had to medicate him in order to make sure he could stand the ceremony. Then just before the ceremony was due to take place and as Dr Johnson was giving the Aga a last check-up, an attendant came in to say that a number of the Aga's followers wanted to see him and tell him how best to use the fund. The Aga was furious and refused to go on with the ceremony unless he was given an absolutely free and unconditional gift. But after he had received the gift, and heard the address of his followers, which spoke of him as 'one of the great figures of the age,' he told the gathering that he would use the money 'as I think best for my spiritual children.'

After the weighing ceremony, however, he soon fell ill and a flying boat had to be chartered to take him back to Europe via Shepherd's Hotel in Cairo. Back in Yakimour, doctors quickly diagnosed that old man's malady: the prostate gland.

In the next few months as Mountbatten ended British rule in India by dividing the Continent into India and Pakistan, the Aga occasionally had a few ideas. In October 1946, he suggested to Nehru that even if there was partition, the Indian Army should remain undivided and act as a policeman

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of South Asia. By July 1947, he thought that neither India nor Pakistan should have an army but rely on the United Nations. But by August 1947, as India and Pakistan came into being, the Aga's main worry was about a family heirloom: the Rs 1,000 a month pension that his grandfather, Aga Khan I, had secured from the British nearly a hundred years before.

On 26th June 1947, the Aga had written to Colonel Fraser at the India Office enquiring about his political pension. The pension was normally paid through a Crown representative but on 15th August 1947, the Crown representatives would disappear and the Aga was worried about how he would receive his money. On 5th September 1947, just two weeks after the birth of India and Pakistan, Patrick informed him that the Crown representatives' powers were now vested in the Governor-General in Council. Political pensioners of his type were required to contact the High Commissioner for India at India House in London. But Patrick did feel that the Aga would be better advised if he took up his pension with the highest authorities. It is not clear whether the Indian Government continued — or still continues — to pay his pension. If they did — or still do — it would be supremely ironic: the Aga, reviled by Indian Nationalists as a British creation and the man who helped create Pakistan, was a political pensioner on the books of the new Government of India.

There was some sad irony in the way the Aga celebrated the emergence of Pakistan — and some similarity with Gandhi's predicament. On the midnight of 15th August 1947, as India emerged to freedom, Mahatama Gandhi, who had done so much to make that possible, refused to take part in the celebrations, choosing instead to stay in Calcutta, where riots between Hindus and Muslims and the country's division into India and Pakistan seemed to Gandhi to be a failure of all his dreams. The Aga could claim credit — and in modern Pakistan he is given some credit — for having started the Indian Muslims on the road to a separate nation. Forty-one years after he had led his fellow Muslims to the Board Room of Lord Minto's Viceregal House in Simla — with the destroying angels watching along the aisles — he could at best act as cheerleader to Jinnah — a lapsed member of his own Khoja community. The Aga may have wondered what might have happened if Jinnah's branch of the Khojas had not split from his own in 1901 — and taken part in the Northcot Memorial — but then perhaps he was really too concerned with trying to secure his British Government pension to worry about anything else.

But he did see the emergence of India and Pakistan as a major break for his family and about this time decided to make a will. Apart from his political pension, there was the problem of whether, as in the past, his followers would be able to send him money and tributes. Also, almost all of the Ismaili property, schools, Jamat Khanas, etc, were in the Aga's name. Had Hoare or Linlithgow granted him the state that he had so earnestly requested, things might have been different, but now he had to take precautions. With the help of André Ardoin, the French-born head of the legal department of Lloyds' Bank, he set about the task. The Aga was naturally secretive and Ardoin had to tease the details out of him.

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Eventually the matter got so complicated that the Aga suggested that Ardoin give up his job at the bank and take charge of his affairs, which he did.

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Chapter 35

Playboy of the South of France

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Aly may not have played a prominent part in the jubilee celebrations, but as the Aga's Indian constituency disappeared, he seemed to come more prominently into his own. He had acquired his own plane, the Avenger, built to his specifications by the De Havilland factory and this seemed to be a modern version of 'have horse, will travel.' His marriage to Joan had long been a fiction. They had separated on fairly amicable terms. Aly was said to have given Joan a settlement of £1.5 million, but had imposed a strange condition: that Joan should not divorce him until he himself requested it. The only discordant note between the two had come when Aly, overriding Joan's wishes, had sent Karim and Amyn to be educated at Le Rosey, a Swiss school where, as Karim's classmate Michael Korda put it, 'snobbery, respect for money, social position ... "chi-chi" had been brought to a level of a living philosophy.' The most prominent graduate was the late Shah of Persia, and Karim and Amyn's schoolmates included, as well as Michael Korda, two nephews of the Shah, His Royal Highness the Duke of Kent and sons of the deposed kings of Italy, and several others with more dubious or disputed titles.

Aly had never had a settled home — or at least what most people would consider home — and in many ways he never did. For the first fifteen years he had been with his mother in Turin and the South of France; then had come the traumatic period with the Waddingtons, and in the thirties, stays in London. Cairo, during the war, probably was the nearest to a home that he had — at least with Joan — and immediately after the war had ended Aly returned to London. But as Joan and he went their separate ways, Aly decided to make his base in his childhood haunts of the South of France. Even then there was no one place that he called home. There was a villa at Deauville, a town house in Paris, training farms and horses in Maisons-Laffitte and Chantilly, studs in Ireland and the Château de l'Horizon near Cannes, which he had seen soon after he landed on the Riviera with the Americans and bought from the American actress, Maxine Elliott, for £40,000. This now became his headquarters and was put in the charge of his uncle Mario Magliano, the brother of Theresa. It was Mario who, all those years earlier, had escorted the Aga from Turin railway station to see the child Theresa had borne. Mario had

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been a constant companion during Aly's childhood. After his move to England in the thirties, the relationship had been more ambiguous. Now, though he was in charge of the Château, the early childhood intimacy did not return. Occasionally Mario would be the best of uncles, sometimes he was just Mario, a servant of Aly, and on at least one occasion a visitor was surprised to learn that while he lunched with Aly, his chauffeur lunched with Mario.

The basis of Aly's mobility was the small but extremely versatile staff he had collected around him. They could all drive and all work. There was his Ismaili servant — an Indian called Hussein, but dubbed 'Tutti' by Aly — his chauffeur Emrys Williams, called 'Daffy', his valet Michael and a couple of other Indian servants. They all travelled with him — they could wait at table one minute, drive the car the next. Perhaps the most important member of Aly's staff was the one constant feature of his town house in Paris: the formidable Marie Louise, a very French, rather attractive woman who could make or mar guests' stay in the house. An English friend of Aly's suspected she knew English but never spoke it, and did not like those who could not speak French. Nor did she much care for Aly's Hollywood women, and this, friends would later think, had an influence on Aly's romances with Rita Hayworth and Gene Tierney.

It was, of course, a cosmopolitan world — a world where most people spoke English and French and in mid-sentence switched from English to French and vice versa. Aly stood out by having an accent that was hard to pin down except for his r's which were distinctly French. For those who knew the Aga as well, the physical contrast between the two could not be more marked. The Aga, with his thick pebble glasses, looked, one observer felt 'like a small frog, a paunchy, tiny, square gentleman.' Aly was taller, more Western in appearance. Famous sons of famous fathers, like Winston and Randolph Churchill, never have easy lives. Aly keenly felt the lack of responsibilities. Everything, it seemed to him, was a gift from his father, and he himself seemed to get so little, apart from hopes, as if those were the only things with which his father could trust him.

Aly, to a certain extent, had been alienated from his father almost from birth, but in the immediate pre-Second World War years, when his marriage to Joan seemed to bring some stability, the two appeared to be getting closer. The Aga loved Joan and thought she was a good influence on Aly. The war had put a stop to all that and, as we have seen, father and son grew increasingly apart. The Aga failed to get Aly to serve in India, or even visit India during the war, and even the India Office were unwittingly cast as referees in this father/son struggle. Aly, in later years, would himself see the arrival of Yvette as the Aga's fourth wife as a definite divide. He often confessed to friends that Yvette influenced his father against giving him responsibilities when he was perfectly capable of taking them on. It was quite reasonable that Aly should have felt that, though he could not have known that even before the war — when the Aga was clamouring for a state — he had confessed to Patrick that he did not think his son would be

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able to inherit his mantle. But then, had he known it would only have deepened his sense of sadness and frustration about leading such an unfulfilled life. Friends could see he hated being treated like a child even in his middle age, and at least one suspected that Aly Khan the playboy developed out of this anger and bewilderment.

Some of his travel and consequent restlessness was due to his involvement with his own, and his father's, horses. Aly would be in Deauville one minute, the next in the Avenger hurrying to Newmarket. 'Inshallah' — as Allah wishes — was his favourite expression, the one he used to both welcome and bid goodbye to the guests (as Viscountess Astor would often say to him, 'I doubt if Allah would often wish it.') In time he was to acquire a knowledge about horses that would outweigh his father's and when he was with horses he seemed to have eyes for nothing else. Also, while his father would embroider his worldly interests — horses, wine or women — with a great deal of cant as, for instance, the Aga's celebrated retort that when wine touched his lips it turned to water, Aly was very straightforward about it. He did not much care for his father's explanation that they kept horses because it provided pleasure to millions, but frankly confessed that 'after all, father and I are just a couple of horse traders. Some people are in this business for fun, we are in it for profit.'

His attitude to women was just as practical — or, if you prefer, cynical. Margaret Whigham may have felt that the Aly of the post-war world was not the Aly who pined for her at the Embassy Club in the London of the 1930s. But women seemed to fill some void in his life and provide some outlet for his restless energy.

Aly's status as a religious leader did not matter, partly because of Islam's attitude to sex. As Evelyn Waugh said, Muslims are the only people who believe there's fucking in heaven, and a playboy religious leader did not seem so outrageous to Aly. Yet friends are adamant that women didn't occupy his life to the exclusion of his other activities, that though frivolous and light-hearted his mind could be sharp. Julian Amery recalls that 'while he was widely regarded as a playboy he had a very keen brain. He could be very frivolous but he could turn and reveal a very clear mind.' During the war when they met in Cairo he was often surprised to find how knowledgeable Aly was about the Vichy regime in Syria and Arab policy in the Middle East.

It was his parties and his women that began to make him a legend in those immediate post-war years. It is hard to know what actually made Aly's parties so special. In many ways they followed the convention of the day: all the women wore evening dresses, the men were in dinner jackets. In one room a band would be playing, in another there would be food and drink. Possibly it was the way Aly fussed over his parties, planning everything himself with immense care; possibly it was the sight of the son of a man who was worshipped as God by his followers, throwing the most outrageous of secular parties. Though Aly himself rarely drank — largely because of a distaste for alcohol — and, unlike his father, had no great appetite for food, he had the ability to make his guests feel at home. But whereas his

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father had sought refuge in discretion, Aly seemed to revel in publicity which his love affairs brought. This, almost more than what he did, was quickly to label him as a notorious playboy.

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It is important to realize that in the late forties and early fifties when Aly was creating the international waves, the world was much more restricted than today. The jets had not yet come into being and the jet-set was an unheard-of expression. In some ways, he paid the price for creating the jet-set — the price of innovation that can be martyrdom and abuse. At a time when the white nations were not yet aware of non-white susceptibilities, Aly seemed to flaunt his ability to bed white women. And not merely women of humble, obscure backgrounds as his father had done, but women who were the pin-ups of the Western world; women who every man, at least every Western man, dreamt of bedding.

His involvement with Rita Hayworth would bring him to the notice of the Catholic Legion of Decency in America, the General Federation of Women's Clubs, censorious editorials in many newspapers around the world, and create the first of many media circuses: photographers chasing other photographers, chasing newsmen, chasing stories that today are part of Royal events. In a way it fulfilled a great need for diversion. It was only three years after the end of the greatest and most destructive war the world had seen, and yet another war seemed to be looming between the victors of the last war. Winston Churchill had already made his Fulton speech, about an iron curtain falling down across half of Europe, America was slowly easing her way into a world — a policeman looking for a burglar to apprehend, and thinking it had detected a murderer in the Soviet Union. Czechoslovakia had just gone Communist and within a few months China was to become Maoist. Colour, gaiety, diversion were necessary. Aly and Rita provided it in full measure in the summer of 1948.

The legend is that Aly first saw Rita in the film *Blood and Sand* in Cairo during the war. He had been so captivated that he saw the film three times. Similar stories were told of him seeing Rita in *Gilda*. However this time he was said to have seen it in the Haymarket, and was also said to have seen it thrice. The real thing can often be a let-down after the fantasy, but in this case Aly seems to have been captivated by the genuine product. Aly spirited Rita off into his own private world and the pair were plunged into the most publicised romance of the age. This was something different: a public adulterous relationship between two people whose spouses were well-known and respected. In September 1948 Rita returned to Hollywood. She — under contract to make another film — was Columbia's boss Harry Cohn's most prized asset. Aly followed, ostensibly for the yearling sales in Saratoga, but landing in the fish bowl of Hollywood. No night club was safe, even dinners at friends' places had to be arranged with elaborate subterfuge and changes of cars. On 1st November 1948, Aly, Rita and her secretary flew to Mexico City. When Virginia Van Vien Upp, acting as an emissary for Harry Cohn, saw them

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there she found that they were prisoners in their hotel room, unhappy and arguing.

There was a bit of respite when they went to Cuba, with Aly travelling as 'A. Khan' and Rita under her proper married name as 'Margerite Cansino de Welles', but this was a brief sojourn for Rita was in love and things were to come to a head.

On 12th November 1948, Rita's divorce from Orson Welles became final and, soon after, Rita returned to Hollywood to tell Harry Cohn — who was against the marriage — that she would not be making her next picture. Rita put her house up for rent, packed sixty bags and, accompanied by her secretary and four-year-old daughter, Rebecca, left for Europe. The *Hollywood Reporter* barely concealed its delight. It described Rita's departure from Hollywood as, 'from Cohn to Cannes to Khan to canned!' Its main columnist Herb Stein asked, 'from the look of things, would you say that Orsen could not, but Aly Khan?'

But if Hollywood took it all as a joke, Europe, particularly the British tabloids, treated the matter rather seriously. Aly had told Rita he would like her to meet Karim, Amyn and Joan. Rita was not sure about that. As it happened, Rita very nearly met Joan at the Palace Hotel in Gstaad. Joan was already staying in the hotel when she found out that Rita and Aly were on their way. She quickly checked out and in London told reporters that she thought the whole business a little too sordid. Speaking in her nanny-English best, she stood outside the entrance of her house in Belgravia and told reporters, 'I have no idea what my husband's plans are. If he wants to return here, well, the house is his.'

Emrys Williams was doing wonders; switching cars, getting Aly's servants to disguise themselves as Aly and Rita, arranging planes that stood ready to take off almost as soon as the car arrived at the airport, and once managing to lose the press for forty-eight hours by going down a side street. Unfortunately this particular expedition did not end up very well, because on the train from Switzerland to France Aly and Rita picked up lice.

It is possible that Aly did not realize the furore his affair would create. He was, after all, a constant traveller, and in the past his travels had always included a pretty woman or two. Maybe he was naïve, or pretending to be, in insisting that his travels with Rita were not exceptional. There was a genuine bewilderment here — he had not yet realized what an explosive mixture his and Rita's semi-public romance was. But the Aga did. In January 1949 Yvette appeared at Gstaad. Over dinner she told Rita and Aly that the Aga's health was poor, and that he was concerned about what Aly was up to, particularly the rumours that Rita was supposed to be pregnant. It was not how he had conducted his affairs. The message got through to Aly and, with Emrys Williams doing his car dodges, Aly and Rita arrived at Yakimour to meet the Aga who advised them to get married as soon as possible. The Aga told the press how sweet and enchanting Rita was and chided them for concentrating on his son's affair. There were, he told them, 150,000 divorces annually in Britain. 'Why should everyone criticize my son?' Joan, playing the part of the perfect wife to the last count, was co-

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operative about the divorce. The official reason did not mention Rita but said that Aly had shown 'lack of consideration'. While the divorce was filed in France, there was a brief, unintentionally comic interlude. The French law required a reconciliation, and the judge Jacques Rousselet tried, as he was required, to get Joan and Aly back together. Not surprisingly he did not succeed. Rita went off to select her trousseau at Jacques Fath's salon in Paris. It was a moment worth recording because the salon's top model was a girl called Bettina, who would later have reason to remember the occasion.

If the lovers were now out in the open and the headlines were all about Prince Charming and Cinderella, the wedding still created a problem. Aly fell and broke his ankle while playing with Amyn, his divorce had not come through,and he did not want to have the wedding at Château de l'Horizon. The wedding was to be on 27th May 1949. It was to be the wedding of the year and the Mayor of Vallauris, Paul Derigon, was quite simply delighted at the prospect of marrying Aly and Rita. He went to the Château to meet Aly, and though Aly seemed to be wearing what appeared to him to be pyjamas, he returned to tell the crowds in the village square that the Prince was charming, and that Rita was ... 'and she....' He did not have to complete the sentence as he blew a kiss, and the crowd roared.

Derigon had the room in the town hall repainted, hundreds of holes in the tiled floor repaired, and by nightfall on 26th May it was ready for what the Imam of the Paris mosque was already describing as 'the biggest Muslim marriage of the century.'

Vallauris had never seen anything like this. Everybody had the day as a public holiday, the schools were closed and the little village was buzzing with rumours about the guests, the food, Rita's wedding dress and, most enchanting of all, the news that 200 gallons of fragrant toilet water were to be dumped into the Château swimming pool. Though this was denied, fantasy was kept alive when at the pre-wedding feast Rita emerged wearing a diamond ring, weighing thirty-two carats, a diamond bracelet, diamond earrings and a diamond-studded comb. The ring, big as a boot buckle, was Aly's main wedding gift to his wife-to-be. It was later valued at £18,000.

The wedding was to take place at eleven, and right on the dot the Aga appeared at the town hall wearing a double-breasted Palm Beach suit in yellow, a huge red rose in his button hole, accompanied by Yvette in a striking blue sari. The fifty guests were already seated in the room, and it was another ten minutes before Aly and Rita entered.

Derigon asked them whether they accepted each other, and they both said quickly in French, 'Oui, oui'. Then Derigon pronounced them man and wife, and read out the speech that he had been working on ever since he knew that there was to be a public marriage. It was, he told the guests, a sensational event. 'Our little city, where our workmen fashion pottery and ceramics and our peasants reap orange blossoms is honoured this day to have the name of Vallauris linked throughout the universe with that of Prince Aly Khan and the great artiste, Rita Hayworth.'

Not everyone took Derigon as seriously as he did. Sadruddin, sixteen,

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who seemed to enjoy the wedding most, winked broadly at Rita, as Derigon showered the praises.

The return journey to the Château in Aly's cream-coloured Cadillac was almost regal. (See illustration, page 236.) The car was preceded and followed by motor-cycle police, and both Aly and Rita waved to the crowd. Rita smiled as the one who had captivated millions of film-goers, Aly's face looked slightly more harassed. Although everything had gone well, he knew his father disapproved. He would later say he did not like the fantastic, semi-royal Hollywood affair, and when the festivities got under way with 600 bottles of champagne, forty pounds of petit-fours and a wedding cake which weighed 120 pounds, the Aga was found to be stuffing himself with caviare.

The rest of the guests enjoyed being entertained by Yves Montand, and as they ate, drank and sang, two giant floral wreaths in the shape of A for Aly and M for Margerite, floated out into the swimming pool. The next day a Muslim ceremony was held and, like all Muslim weddings, it was in two parts: in the first, non-religious, part, Aly and Rita signed a marriage contract, the bridegroom paying a dowry for the bride, a rather nominal amount; the second, the religious part, the Imams read from the Koran and gave advice to the bridegroom on how to live a happy life. Significantly the Aga did not stay for the ceremony, leaving before it began, and soon after the ceremony Vatican sources confirmed that Rita, a Catholic marrying outside the church had excommunicated herself, especially as she did not have permission. For the Vatican, the civil ceremony did not exist and it declared it would ignore it. Just to complete the Islam-Christian tangle, Abu Aly, a Khoja leader in Pakistan and a member of the Council in Karachi took the view that Rita Hayworth was Rita Hayworth no longer but 'Princess Aly Khan, a Muslim princess, and any children she may bear will be soldiers of Islam.'

Not everybody was amused. Timothy G. Turner, writing in the *Los Angeles Times* commented that the wedding did not interest him, 'except as a spectacle of bad taste.' The pre-nuptial details had left him cold, 'also, I got no thrill out of learning that Aly is the direct descendant of Fatima, daughter of Mohammed, and the Caliph Aly, Mohammedan number two man. I am reliably informed that the bride is a direct, lineal descendant of Adam and Eve.' In fact, Rita was discovering what it was to marry the son of a man who was God to his followers. It could have been a scene out of Conrad; Rita, tired in her floppy hat, sitting in a chair while Khojas came up and one by one kissed her foot and gave her presents, generally a pearl or a little gold object. It was a scene, in some ways, wholly appropriate to the end of an imperial age, brown people of various shapes and sizes, many in exotic clothes, paying homage to a white goddess. Albeit a celluloid goddess.

We may take that as a high-point of the Rita-Aly relationship. It is hard to tell when things began to go wrong. Some friends suggested things were going wrong even before the marriage when, long before the wedding, Rita learned of Aly's unfaithfulness. Emrys Williams would later tell her he would keep one woman waiting while he ushered another one out. If Rita had heard all this before her marriage, she was to hear and see a lot more

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after it. But as she later told reporters, 'I paid no attention because, well, what was I supposed to do?' Just as crucial was the social divide. A month after the wedding he brought Rita over to London for the races. It was the week of Royal Ascot and Bill Astor's first wife, now Sarah Baring, was asked to escort Rita Hayworth. Sarah was very fond of Aly and though she did not find him physically attractive, found him sweet and a very good conversationalist. But escorting Rita Hayworth around Ascot was a trial. 'She had just married Aly and she did not know anybody here. She was absolutely pleasant, but frightfully boring. She just had no conversation. She wasn't a beauty, at least not compared to Joan, who was a classical beauty.'

When, later, Sarah asked Ellie Smethwick, who used to run Aly's Gilton stud in Ireland, what Rita did in the stud, she replied, 'What does she do in the stud? Oh, she just washes her hair every day.'

The only place where Rita seemed to create a sensation was at the Le Rosey school, where Karim and Amyn were studying. It was part of the Sunday ritual of the school to see, precisely at twelve o'clock, a Rolls Royce with blacked-out windows and a French diplomatic licence drive into the gravel schoolyard and stop under the medieval clocktower. The car contained the old Aga and, as soon as it stopped, Karim and Amyn would walk over and fall to their knees; a fat hand would emerge from a window that had been electrically lowered, Karim and Amyn would kiss the hand and each receive a Swiss five-franc piece. The hand would withdraw, the window would be raised, and the car would circle round the courtyard and vanish up to Lausanne. This would become so standard that the others at Le Rosey paid little attention. But after Aly's marriage to Rita he brought her to the school and that created quite a stir. Karim and Amyn may not have meant much as grandsons of a religious leader, but as stepsons of Rita Hayworth they acquired a new image.

Speculation about pregnancy accompanied Rita to England. Rumours that she was pregnant, which were rife even before the ceremony, grew stronger when people saw her at the races. A few weeks later at Longchamp she actually fainted, fuelling further speculation. Summer was spent in Deauville in much the usual fashion, at the outset of which the Aga was involved in a curious incident.

On 3rd August 1949, the Aga, accompanied by Yvette, her maid and chauffeur, left their villa in Cannes on the start of a fairly normal journey to Nice where they were to catch a plane to Deauville. The car had gone a hundred yards from the villa and was just about to take a bend in the road when a Citroen car came rushing towards them from the other direction. It drew up alongside, two young men got out, surrounded the Aga's car, threatened the occupants with tommy guns and demanded the bag in which Yvette carried her jewels. All the jewellery was insured for about 213,000,000 francs (approximately £234,000). By mid-day, barriers had been established on every road leading towards Marseilles, Italy, the Alps; airports and ports were being watched and, by nightfall, a reward of 5,000,000 francs had been offered to anyone who could help in the recovery

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of the jewels. The search for the bandits was long and extensive and it was four years before they were brought to justice and sentenced to several years' imprisonment. Eventually the relatives of one of the convicted men wrote a book, trying to clear his name. Lloyds, with whom the jewellery had been insured, met the Aga's claim in full, and the whole nasty affair was settled.

The autumn was just as confusing and, occasionally, sad. As Aly and Rita moved to Paris there was increasing speculation about the arrival of the baby. The Aga, for some reason, held himself up as forecaster and was confidently predicting an October birth, while Aly kept insisting it would be in February.

Just then, however, he heard that his great friend Peter Beatty, who had been ill for some time and going blind, had jumped out of the sixth-floor window of the London Ritz and killed himself. Aly went over to London for the funeral and on the return journey very nearly crashed the Avenger, and seemed to adopt a certain sense of fatalism as he waited for the child.

It finally arrived at 9.45 a.m. three days after Christmas in the luxurious suite of the Clinique Montchoisi in Lausanne. It had been eleven months since Aly and Rita had decided to get married, but only seven months since Derigon had declared them man and wife. The child was called Yasmin, the Arabic name for Jasmin. She weighed five and a half pounds at birth and like the courtship and the marriage, Yasmin had been ushered into the world in a flurry of publicity.

The alchemy of a first child seemed to work, but only a short time. Life at the Château had not improved all that much and Aly had increasingly to think of diversions to amuse Rita. There was a holiday cruise in Errol Flynn's yacht that included Rita's favourite director Charles Vidor, the man who had directed *Gilda*, and soon Aly suggested a tour of the Khoja community in East Africa. Just to sweeten things even further he invited Leigh and Jackson Lighter, two of Rita's friends, and agreed with Lighter's idea of making a movie on the trip.

It was meant to be a four-month trip but it began disastrously. New Year's Eve 1951 saw the couple in Cairo at a party attended by King Farouk. For Aly this was an old haunt, and he seemed to know everybody. For Rita this may not have been the snobbish, upper-crust world of Royal Ascot, but it was just as foreign. She did not like Egypt or the entertainment, she did not like Farouk and she did not like his cronies. She always seemed to be left alone at tables, while Aly did his brilliant party pieces. She had never been ignored before and at a certain stage in the party, while her husband was the centre of all other eyes, she got up and left.

Although she calmed down, acting as Aly's consort to the Khojas of East Africa was even more trying. At her wedding she may have played the silent white goddess, receiving tributes from her far away subjects in Nairobi and other parts of East Africa but now she was suddenly required to be a goddess. For the Aga Khan's followers adjusting to Rita Hayworth took some doing. After the wedding they had had to hear taunts from Hindus and also from orthodox Muslims about Aly's marriage and way of life.

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Some of them had for the first time actually seen a Western film, to find out who Rita Hayworth really was. Now they were seeing her in the flesh, and trying to judge how she would make out as a future Begum. Rita had experienced something like this when as a starlet she had been sent out by the studio to publicize films. But this was real, in a world she did not know and could not even begin to understand. Although she was the white goddess for her brown subjects, the real white rulers in East Africa ignored her. Rita, often left alone by Aly, increasingly found herself escorted by orthodox men of the community who would tell her what she should not do, like swimming, rather than what she should do.

The high point of the trip was to be the safari. The party was to fly up from Nairobi to Telek, when Rita suddenly pleaded illness. She stayed behind and promised to join Aly as soon as she had recovered. A few days later the Lighters arrived from Dar-es-Salaam with a note from Rita. She was returning to Europe immediately. Aly flew back to Nairobi and tried to change her mind. But there was no looking back. Officially, it was announced that Rita was tired and missing her children. Aly continued with his tour. Rita arrived back at the Château and thought about her own future. Marriage break-ups invariably produce partisans, and the Rita-Aly divorce was no exception. Aly appeared casual to his friends, suggesting he was not all that keen, that this was his normal style. Rita's friends, on the other hand, suggested that it was her determination to break the marriage that was the crucial factor. Marriage to Aly had impoverished Rita. Aly's riches were not his own, rather the riches that his father allowed him and during the courtship and the marriage Rita found that it was her income that was keeping the couple together.

In the finale of the saga, in attendant cloak and dagger atmosphere, Rita feared she might lose Yasmin, that the Aga or Aly would use their wealth and position to snatch the child from her, so the very night that the Aga and the Begum arrived back from a trip to Pakistan and India — their first trip to the continent since independence — Rita with her two daughters, Rebecca and Yasmin, and a nurse went on a midnight dash to Paris and Le Havre to board the French liner *De Grasse*. She had borrowed the money for the tickets from the Lighters and so concerned was she about secrecy that her name and the names of her children did not appear on the passenger list. Throughout the voyage she stayed in her cabin; it was the surreptiousness and the suddenness of the action that was to dismay the Aga who never really forgave Rita Hayworth for it.

The rest of this story is simply told. Aly heard the news of Rita's departure for America in Cairo and initially discounted it. Yes, he might go to the States himself; no, there was the English racing season to think of — a comment which got the sardonic approval of a London newspaper which said, 'it is good to see a man who puts first things first.' By April 1952, Rita's attorney Bartley Crumb was telling reporters that no decision had been taken on divorce, the inference being that it was certainly being debated. In Paris Aly's attorney Pierre Delizot ridiculed divorce talk as 'ridiculous ... stupid ... scandalous ... they are only a publicity stunt — an

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attempt to exploit a temporary situation.' But Rita had asked for a divorce and a trust fund of $3,000,000 for Yasmin. There was a suggestion that the Aga himself might travel to America to come to a financial settlement of Rita's proposed divorce. And almost inevitably there was a Muslim angle. *Islamic Tradition of America* declared that if Rita wanted to bring up Yasmin as a Muslim, she would have to give up bathing-suits and screen kisses. Sheik Daoud Ahmed Fazal said bringing up a Muslim child entailed grave responsibility, and if Rita Hayworth did want to do that, she would have to veil herself in a long, loose-fitting, chemise-like garment which would cover all but her face and hands. She would have to give up drinking intoxicating beverages and cigarettes. She would also be required to read the Koran regularly.

Aly's methods were somewhat more soothing and cosmopolitan. He wrote a friendly letter declaring that if Rita should want to love him his arms would always be open for her. On their second anniversary he sent her two dozen American Beauty roses and a message, 'Remember me?'

There was one more attempt at reconciliation. In August 1952, Aly arrived in America, once again ostensibly to attend the yearling sales at Saratoga Springs. Profitable they were too. He sold twenty yearlings at a record price of $173,500. Then he flew into Los Angeles. He was met, not by Rita but by Charles Vidor. Aly, always such a light traveller, had excess luggage of 175 pounds, mostly of five stacks of toys he had bought for Yasmin. What, wondered the press, had he bought for Miss Rita Hayworth? It was nearly midnight before Vidor drove him to Rita Hayworth's home and Rita met Aly at the front door. Four hours later Aly emerged, hands in his trouser pockets and looking very glum. He wouldn't say anything. Reporters had set up an almost permanent camp outside the house, every now and again sightseers were allowed to tour past the house.

The next day he was back and in order to avoid newsmen he took a rear road and, apparently, climbed the hillside through the brush to scurry past Rita's swimming pool into the house. This time, after a lobster lunch, he emerged smiling, but more intent on talking about horses than their future. Rebecca and Yasmin were suffering from whooping cough and a doctor had been called, but a few hours later, both Rita and Aly were involved in a much more serious matter. Yasmin was discovered asleep on the floor with an empty bottle of sleeping pills near her hand. Aly was informed and even as he arrived, she was taken to Santa Monica Receiving Hospital, to have her stomach pumped. Fortunately it was not very serious.

The emergency seemed to bring the two together, and a month later Rita sailed for France. At Le Havre there was Aly's car and the driver, but no Aly. At the Paris house, again no Aly, and it was another day before he arrived from Château de l'Horizon. It lasted exactly a week; Rita moved out of the Paris home and into the Lancaster Hotel. Her Paris attorney, Mademoiselle Suzanne Blum, blamed Aly for organizing the whole situation, declaring that Rita was bored with her husband's entourage and saw no chance of a reconciliation with him. Soon, in another statement, Rita explained their very different lives. She loved Aly, loved him very

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much, but he was a gambler, a horse racing fanatic, a big-game hunter. He was a playboy. She was an actress who worked around the year. Her life was not living in Paris with eighty people of all kinds coming and going, and dining at Maxim's every night. Then came the crunching blow, 'what's more, Aly spends too much while I have to work for the two of us.'

The counter-attacking statement from Aly's Paris lawyer, Roger Palmieri, merely emphasized the gulf between the two. Rita told her lawyer to proceed with the divorce and on 26th January 1953 she obtained a divorce in a Reno court. Aly was not even represented by an attorney and Rita won custody of Yasmin who was actually present in the court room, innocently chewing gum. The final divorce settlement was reached in 1954. Aly agreed to deposit $100,000 with the Morgan Guaranty Trust Company of New York before each of Yasmin's annual visits to Europe. Rita also obtained from the Aga a letter promising that Yasmin would always be returned to her, a declaration that was filed in French courts, thus giving it legal backing. Eventually, in the winter of 1955, Rita brought Yasmin and Rebecca to Europe again. A peace of sorts had been declared with Aly.

Ironically, Aly now developed the sort of relationship with Yasmin that his own father had had with him. A father who came suddenly, brought a lot of presents, stayed for a few days, and disappeared just as suddenly — only to call from far-off places over crackling telephone lines. A friend of Aly was convinced that he was not only a good father but good with children. Philippa Astor, the Viscountess Astor, recalls how after her first child was born, when she was ill in bed, Aly came to visit her and sat for hours at the end of the four-poster bed, playing happily with the baby. It is not the conventional picture of the playboy, but it is one that Philippa Astor remembers clearly.

By the time the business with Rita was settled (it was four years since they had properly split up) Aly had had several romantic liaisons and affairs in the meantime. Before Rita this may not have made news, now almost every woman that Aly met was news: Joan Fontaine, who declared they were good friends of very long standing and that Aly was very charming; an eighteen-year-old fashion model, Irene Lehr, whose father told the press that he expected her to marry Aly any day; twenty-eight-year-old Suzanne Dadol, a former model who was chosen by the Deauville casino to be that year's hostess of ceremonies; and during the Cannes Film Festival, Irene Papas, the Greek actress. Papas would later declare that her meeting with Aly Khan would set her back ten years. That year there was also Zsa Zsa Gabor who was in Paris to play in the film *Moulin Rouge*, one of the few women to resist Aly, 'he knew how to give a woman the idea that he would die if she would not give in to him. He was after me for years, the sweet thing. I used to tell him "no, no, no" but he never gave up.' How much these women meant to Aly is difficult to say — Gene Tierney certainly did, if only for a time.

After Rita's *Gilda*, Gene's *Laura* was perhaps appropriate, and his affair with Gene Tierney had many similarities to his relationship with Rita, if not with quite such an intense or explosive ending. Like Rita, Gene was a

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Catholic, though her Catholic world was far-removed from Rita's Spanish origins. Her father had been an insurance broker; at fifteen she had been to a Swiss boarding school and had lived most of her early life near fashionable Connecticut, to feel if not part of New York society at least an extension of it. By the time she met Aly in Argentina in 1951, Gene's life in some ways had been just as rich and varied as his. She had established her reputation as a leading film star, had eloped, married and then separated from Olec Cassini, had been involved with Howard Hughes and had had a long, tormented love affair with Jack Kennedy. Yet their first meeting in Buenos Aires one Christmas was a failure. Gene, who had begun to sense that there was 'something wrong in my head', was neither impressed with his looks, 'he had a soft face and looked, I thought, like a slimmer version of Orsen Welles,' nor his reputation, which convinced her he was a man of trivia.

But, as Zsa Zsa Gabor had discovered, Aly was not easily deterred and he eagerly participated in the chase. He began by showering her with flowers and messages, but it was another year before they were to meet: in Europe. She had come to London to do a film and found herself at the centre of a menagerie: Spencer Tracy's long, tormented love affair with Katharine Hepburn, and Gene's mother's wish that her daughter get it together with Clark Gable, who seemed obsessed with his third wife, Carole Lombard, who had died in a plane crash during the war. It was in this mood that Gene flew from London to Paris to join her California friends, Fran and Ray Stark, who were already being entertained by Aly Khan.

They told her what she already knew; that Aly was dying to meet her. 'Finally, I agreed to join him for an evening at the theatre. I really accepted as a favour to the Starks, troubled, unwell and not knowing why, I thought to myself, ''All I need is some oriental super-stud.''' But the evening at the theatre worked like a charm for Aly. Gene Tierney was captivated. Aly, from being a man of trivia, was now a man who did not force himself on women, cultured, charming and quite 'fascinating'. Later, her sister Pat would think Gene had fallen for Aly because she was sick. It was a symptom of approaching nervous breakdown, that would see her in a psychiatric hospital for the next few years.

Gene had thought she ought to see a psychiatrist, but her mother advised a more traditional cure; an attractive man and pretty new French dresses. Nothing could have suited Aly better. Gene, now part of Aly's usual circus, greeted 1953 at a nightclub celebration in Cannes. Celebrations were presided over by the Aga who watched, not all that happily, as Aly took Gene in his arms and kissed her lovingly. This time, though, it was in less of a goldfish bowl than his romance with Rita. In January, reporters observing Gene and Aly together at the Monte Carlo casino — Aly losing money, Gene watching — asked Aly about marriage. He said, 'I don't want to marry her any more than she wants to marry me. The newspapers have had me married at least five hundred thousand times — to every pretty girl I go dancing with. It is no use denying these things, because that only adds fuel to the fire.' Gene Tierney was just as reticent and when asked whether she

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intended to marry Aly said, 'Excuse me. You know that I never speak on personal matters.'

Gene Tierney may have been coping better with the press than Rita Hayworth did, but she was not doing any better with the Aga or Aly's associates. Aly's influential Paris housekeeper, Marie Louise, who was almost like a nanny to Aly, had taken an instinctive dislike to Gene Tierney. She had never much cared for the American starlets that Aly fancied, but she particularly disliked this one. The thought of another movie star wife appalled the Aga, who told Elsa Maxwell there was no way Aly could marry another movie star. He had learned his lesson from Rita Hayworth and the problems over Yasmin. If Aly married Gene Tierney, the Aga threatened not to receive her. When this was reported to Aly, as the Aga meant it to be, he was quite furious. It seemed to him the height of hypocrisy; his father had had a pretty extensive love life, the difference was that he had not carried it out in public.

It is doubtful if either Aly or Gene ever really wanted to marry, though he seemed to have proposed to her in early 1953, and Gene was able to impose her own order, at one point keeping Aly out of nightclubs for three months and persuading him to take life more seriously. But the thought of going to India or Pakistan simply appalled Gene. Her brother warned her that the poverty there 'would break your heart'. She could not very well become a wife for Aly and not visit his followers in the subcontinent.

The affair continued until the spring of 1954 when Gene returned to America to resume her film career. Aly would, every now and again, ring her from Bombay or some such exotic place and, in March 1954, flew to Mexico and took up residence in a rather run-down hotel resort at Rosario Beach, just south of the border in Mexico's Bajr province. The choice was strategic; it was safely enough near Hollywood for Gene to pop over, but outside the reach of Rita's lawyer. Aly had arranged a three-room suite for Gene and her mother under the name of 'Melvyn Taylor and Party' but such subterfuge could not keep out the press. While Aly and Gene were by the swimming pool, the press asked questions and discovered that the glittering diamond ring that Aly had given Gene was a 'friendship' ring. She would not talk about marriage, but if she did get married she preferred a Paris wedding — and a honeymoon in Paris and Naples.

In April, legal matters with Rita having been settled, Aly and Gene, described now as his fiancée, drove down to Los Angeles. She was playing in *The Egyptian*, and in the characteristic way of Hollywood, Aly, whose ancestry was still enough of a novelty for him to become a minor sensation, was co-opted as the instant expert on Egypt, and the Publicity Head at Twentieth Century Fox issued a press release, saying Aly was serving as unpaid 'technical adviser'.

But despite the feverish speculation, with Elsa Maxwell acting as adviser — she advised Gene that marriage to Aly could mean the Aga cutting him off — the romance was all but over. Aly had no intention of marrying, and Gene's nervous ailment was reaching a critical state. April 1954 marked the end of Aly's Hollywood chapter. He would still have

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romances, but within a year and a half he was being married off by the press to Bettina — his last major love. The glamour and the publicity that surrounded his affairs, first with Rita then on a smaller scale with Gene, now abated. Aly was still a great playboy in the eyes of the world, but somehow it was more acceptable, except for one man — the Aga.

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Chapter 36

The Battle for Succession

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Aly's emergence as an international playboy had inevitably meant a back seat for the Aga. Now, when he appeared in public — as during Aly's courtship with Rita Hayworth — he looked not so much the man of yesterday, as the man of the-day-before-yesterday; thick, specially coloured dark glasses for his extreme short-sightedness, the large body now sunk into a huge armchair, his suit barely fitting him, and the most prominent part of his clothes being, almost invariably, a woollen sweater. Apart from acting as a disapproving, stern father in the years after Indian and Pakistani independence in 1947, he hardly featured in public life. There had been, as we have seen, publicity surrounding the unnerving hold-up in France and even the 1950 trip to the subcontinent — the first since independence — had been marred by the fact that on the very night that he returned, Rita Hayworth had left for America with Aly's daughter.

Even otherwise that trip had not gone well. Though his followers had received him rapturously, in a speech to the World Muslim Conference in Karachi on 9th February 1951, he suggested that Pakistan should discard Urdu as its national language and replace it with Arabic. Urdu, he argued, was the language of the Muslim downfall, not really a Muslim language at all but a Hindu one, and no self-respecting Muslim would be associated with Urdu. Language has always been an emotive subject on the subcontinent. Pakistani nationalists had zealously clung to Urdu as their great language. Iqbal, their great poet, an inspirer of the idea of Pakistan, had written much of his poetry in that language. The Aga's remarks were seen as a degradation of the national language and aroused a great deal of hostile reaction. Not since his controversial defence of Chamberlain during Munich, and not even then, had the Aga's public views been so at odds with a nation's sentiments. In the past when the Aga had put forward his very many controversial — and often odd — ideas, he had been careful to do so in private to British officials. This somewhat embarrassing public *faux pas* confirmed what had been known privately for a long time: that he was out of touch with Muslim sentiments on the subcontinent. But that was hardly surprising.

Ever since the British withdrawal from India the Aga had sought, and failed, to find an acceptable political role. Some eighteen months before his Karachi *faux pas* he had actually requested the Persian Government to

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confirm that he was a Persian subject. When challenged about his holding both British and Persian nationalities, he retorted, 'Why not? A man can have twenty nationalities.' A few months after his return from Karachi to France, as the Persian oil crisis blew up, he offered his services to the British. The Foreign Office were not keen to accept that the Aga had 'influence' in Persia. However the Aga transmitted to the British his own views on the oil situation and how it could be solved. But we may never know what they were. Although the Foreign Office files of 1951 have now been opened for inspection under the Thirty Year Rule, that particular file relating to the Aga's views 'on the Persian oil situation' has been retained by the Foreign Office and is still not accessible to the public. Whatever these views were, the Aga took the British refusal even to consider them rather badly. In December 1951, the Nawab of Bhopal told the managing director of Grindlay's Bank in India that it was 'a matter of very great regret ... that the immense influence which has been exerted between the Aga Khan and himself (the Nawab) for good had not been brought into use.' The Nawab, who described himself as the Aga's political heir, was critical of the Labour Government which he felt was 'entirely out of touch with the Middle Eastern countries' affairs' and was willing to offer the Aga's and his own services if the Conservatives came back to power. The Nawab had already spoken to Anthony Eden on this question. The Foreign Office note, however, summing up the Aga's influence and the effect of Aly's publicized affairs on it, was curt:

> would suggest that the Aga Khan's influence in these [Middle Eastern] countries is due hardly at all to the size and significance of his followers in each country but more to his wealth and personal reputation. It is doubtful if the influence will be inherited by Ali Khan, and it may have already been reduced by his behaviour.

One writer has suggested that this was about the time that the Aga first began to think of disinheriting Aly and drew up a will naming Karim as his successor. According to the writer, this was done under Yvette's influence, who saw this as ensuring a clean break that would, possibly, strengthen her own position within the community. The will, when it was finally read out after the Aga's death, showed that it had been made in 1955.

However the winter of 1951-52, as Aly and Rita's marriage dissolved, did mark a resurgence of the public Aga. He was now seventy-five and still fairly active, helped perhaps by resorting to the cellular therapy pioneered by Paul Niehans. His treatment consisted of the injection of cells scraped from unborn lambs and was alleged to cure cancer, heart disease, diabetes, cirrhosis of the liver, insomnia, depression and impotence. The Aga shared the treatment with Somerset Maugham, Konrad Adenauer, Pope Pius XII, Thomas Mann and the Duke of Windsor — a treatment that was said to halt old age and recreate one's youth. Probably it was this that enabled the Aga to indulge still in his great sporting pastime — golf.

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He particularly liked to go either to the Mougins Country Club near

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Cannes or the course at Mandelieu. The Mougins Club had certain very obvious attractions: there the golf caddies were girls known as cadettes and stories were common of how the Aga would ask them to play golf against him for bets of 5,000 francs. If the girl lost the match, the bet was forgotten, if she won she was immediately paid. For a long time one of his favourite cadettes there was Simone Bessone, a girl of nineteen. Her two sisters were also cadettes and their brother Marcel became a caddy-master. The Aga took such a keen interest in one cadette's progress that he promoted her to be his partner in golf and got another cadette to carry his clubs. Things reached such a pass that the Aga's friends who did not know who his new partner was, began to call her 'Princess Caddie Khan' in mockery of Rita Hayworth's honorary title of 'Princess'.

Photographs reveal the Aga in his favourite woolly sweater and thick pebble glasses helped by a young French girl carrying the clubs and looking almost like his granddaughter, but full of expectancy and wonder.

The Aga had decided to celebrate his platinum jubilee in 1953 and, for the first time in some years, began to appear in the British press, other than in the social columns. In the winter of 1951-52, *The Times* criticized Islam, and in response the Aga wrote a letter defending Islam and criticizing the West. In August 1952 he gathered all his East African followers for a conference at Evian. Plans were announced to hold a platinum jubilee celebration in Dar-es-Salaam in August 1953. Contributions for this purpose were already being raised, the poorer members of the community saving sixpence a month, the richer proportionately larger sums. The idea was to set up another trust fund similar to that set up after the 1946 diamond jubilee celebrations. The larger purpose of the conference was to assess the community's future role in East Africa.

Within a month, two biographies of the Aga were published: Stanley Jackson's *Prince, Prophet and Sportsman*, and Harry J. Greenwall's *His Highness the Aga Khan*. Both biographies, published within a month of each other, repeated assertions and anecdotes about the Aga which were of very doubtful accuracy. A misquotation from Napier about the first Aga Khan which had been used in the book on the Aga by Navroji Dumasia in 1938 was now repeated and made into a legend. It would subsequently be repeated by almost every writer on the Aga, including Willi Frischauer in 1970. Probably it was the influence of these biographies, or something else, but the Aga suddenly decided to write his own memoirs.

Normally memoirs, particularly those of international figures like the Aga, are based on the documents and papers collected by the person writing it and, of course, supplemented and possibly coloured by such memories as the person may choose to remember. The Aga, in a very unusual move, actually decided to ask for information and wrote the sort of letter that would be written by a biographer writing the life of a man long dead. In a letter to *The Times Literary Supplement*, published on 14th November 1952, he said 'I shall also be grateful if those who have any letters or documents or other information which may be of help to me in my work will be kind enough to send copies or particulars of the same (not originals)

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to me at the address below.' The astonishing implication was that the Aga had not preserved records and documents such as would be necessary for him to construct a long and varied life.

It was just as well, perhaps, that the Aga did not have a great many documents for the only time he could spare for writing his memoirs was after three o'clock, and he could only dictate his notes to his secretary, Miss Merioneth Whitaker, between six and eight-thirty every evening.

The Aga's announcement that he was writing his memoirs was also the signal for a publicity blitz about him. In December 1952, Gordon Young published the first of a series of articles in the *Daily Mail* on his life at Yakimour. In March 1953, Gordon Young had interviewed Yvette and done a special feature on her. And the *Daily Mail*'s sub-headline on the article, 'The Lady of the Villa on the Hill', provided a clue to the gushing piece. The Gordon Young interviews may or may not have been planned, but the *Daily Mail* articles were certainly to have important consequences for the memoirs. The Aga gives no indication in his memoirs that he received any literary help in writing them. Yet a comparison between the *Memoirs* and the letters the Aga wrote over a period of almost fifty years indicates the vast literary gulf: the *Memoirs* are more organised, grammatically correct and without any of the idiosyncratic style and language that characterized his letters.

At one stage the Aga seemed to have signed a verbal contract with Rupert Croft-Cooke to ghost the *Memoirs*. Croft-Cooke travelled to Paris and met the Aga, who directed Miss Whitaker to hand over the notes he had dictated to Croft-Cooke. Rooms were also booked for him at a hotel in Evian-les-Bains where the Aga and Croft-Cooke would work on the book. Croft-Cooke's agent, Curtis Brown, drew up a contract to provide him with £3,000 as an advance and 10% interest in author's rights, plus expenses. But something seems to have gone wrong, for the Aga's publishers did not want Croft-Cooke to do the work. The situation threatened to turn nasty, with Croft-Cooke instructing lawyers to either obtain a just settlement or issue a writ for the whole amount. Eventually, the Aga decided to settle with Croft-Cooke and pay him the necessary amount. It is not clear which of the Aga's publishers — Cassell in Britain, Simon & Schuster in America — objected to Croft-Cooke. Eventually, with the help of Noel Barber, foreign manager of the *Daily Mail* in Paris, and with John Connell acting as ghost writer, the *Daily Mail* put the book together. The Aga acknowledged only the help of his secretary, Miss Whitaker, for her 'invaluable skills and patience in the preparation of the manuscript.'

There was one other snag: the preface. According to one source, before the Aga embarked on his *Memoirs* he had consulted his Riviera neighbour, William Somerset Maugham. Maugham had advised him to leave out the salacious bits — about women and houris — and concentrate on his political and public role. Maugham's very thorough biographer, Morgan, does not mention this story but has told us the grubby way in which Maugham provided a preface. The Aga had every reason to think that this would be a fairly simple matter; they were not only neighbours but got on quite well with each other. In 1938 when Maugham had visited India,

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overcoming his prejudice against Kipling and the type of stories he had written, he had obtained letters of introduction from the Aga to various Maharajas. In 1953, as he lay sick in hospital, the Aga had sent roses. But when he received the Aga's request for a preface, Maugham told his agent the Aga ought to pay substantially: 'cufflinks, or pearl studs or a cigarette case, but if it's a commercial transaction I think he should pay the proper price.' The preface had taken a fortnight and nothing less that $2,500 should do.

As Maugham's biographer admits, the preface consisted of 'several inconsequential pages' and it's doubtful that Maugham read the book or thought much about it. The title of the *Memoirs* also created a few problems. The Aga had wanted to call it *World Enough and Time*. Lincoln Schuster of Simon & Schuster telegraphed from America that there was a novel of that name written by Robert Penn Warren. As a fall back he suggested *Journey through Space and Time* as a subtitle. But the Aga preferred *A Journey through Space-Time* which seemed quite impossible to Schuster because of its science fiction implications. Eventually, the Aga agreed that the book would be called *Memoirs of the Aga Khan*, with a subtitle *World Enough and Time*. This was satisfactorily settled, but there was one omission: the American edition left out the dedication to Yvette. Rather pained, the Aga telegraphed Simon & Schuster suggesting that in the second edition they should not forget the dedication. Simon & Schuster did not.

Memoirs, let alone those of statesmen, are necessarily selective. The Aga's *Memoirs* — widely regarded as a first-hand testimonial — deserved some sort of prize for the most remarkable one to be produced this century: remarkable not for what it said, but for what it did not say. As *The Times* reviewer moaned, 'they told us all too little.' He had accepted Somerset Maugham's advice about not revealing salacious details of his women so completely that the Aga barely mentioned his private life — covering his wives and his son in a few nondescript paragraphs. Apart from a few details about his early childhood in Bombay, the *Memoirs* provided no feel about his life — and very little about his times. Even in public affairs his memory was so selective — he did not actually distort it — that it was almost impossible to square many of the events the Aga described with conventional, accepted history. The *Memoirs* should have been fascinating. Here was a man who had tied himself to the chariot of the British Empire and was writing his *Memoirs* — in 1954 — when Britain was just experiencing the first pangs of the decline of its Empire. The Aga provided no explanation of his rise to political prominence, no description of the various ups and downs of his career, or even the controversial and sometimes wild ideas he had outlined to British officials. The Aga, understandably, was keen to impress his prominence in world affairs but his method was not to describe what he had done, but to relate a host of anecdotes about leading personalities, with whole pages devoted to popular heroes like Winston Churchill and Lloyd George. Reading his *Memoirs* was to experience a curious bewilderment: either the historians had missed important events, or the Aga had been describing something that never

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happened. One redeeming feature was that the Aga never damned anybody. This led to such stupefying boredom, that Noel Barber, who had organized the *Memoirs*, was not surprised that the Aga's friend Beaverbrook had not wanted to serialize it in the *Daily Express*. The rival *Daily Mail*, owned by Rothermere, thought it had a coup in serializing the *Memoirs*, but Barber feels that Beaverbrook, on reading the text, probably had the last laugh.

The reviews on the whole were kind and the Aga collected them assiduously, getting his publishers to send them to him by airmail wherever he was in the world.

The *Memoirs* were used by the Khojas — and still are — as a sort of history of their community and was a useful prelude to his platinum jubilee. The Evian decision to hold it in Africa had to be changed, it was asserted, because of the Mau Mau trouble — when the Aga again publicly supported the British — and shifted to Karachi.

On 3rd February 1954, the Aga was 'symbolically' weighed against platinum in Karachi. The ceremony, meant to mark seventy years of the Aga's Imamate, was premature and lacked the novelty of the 1936 celebrations, or the depth of emotion of those in 1946. But the ceremony had been planned carefully and everyone from the Aga, Aly and Yvette down to the officials, played their part. The Platinum Jubilee Association had been formed in Pakistan four years before and had so far collected £260,000 against a target of £300,000. As in previous weighing ceremonies the money was to be used to finance a corporation which would lend business capital to Ismailis. The Aga had expressed the hope that by 1960 every Ismaili in Pakistan would have a profession or business of his own. The only colour in the ceremony was provided by the Aga's Hunza followers and the ruler of Kalat, a state the Aga had once coveted and whose national costumes stood out against the general drabness of the ceremony. Since 1946 the Aga had lost almost thirty pounds and now weighed 215 pounds. Despite this, the ceremony seemed to take something out of the Aga. He developed a bad cold and high temperature and had to cancel all his appointments. A few days later Yvette had to step in and deliver his message to the Pakistani women at a function organized by the All-Pakistan Women's Association. It was, for its time, very liberated: it encouraged the women to fight for their rights, the right to prayer, to equality in production, industrial service and in office work. The Aga squarely criticized the Pakistani men who 'do not realise the importance of women taking equal rank with men in the welfare, in the government, and in the general activities and prosperity of the country.'

Aly had gone ahead of the Aga, taking with him his great friend Bill Astor. But once the Aga and Yvette arrived, Aly was pushed into the background. Was this, perhaps, a straw in the wind? Was the expected heir, built up for so many years as the natural successor, being pushed aside? Succession was a fairly common whisper in Khoja circles, but when Yvette heard she was quite furious. Any talk of the Aga dying was ridiculous; he would live to be a hundred, she prophesied.

Within a few months the Aga was talking to journalists of 'the new

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responsibilities which I have now undertaken', though what they were could only be guessed at. In the summer of 1954, though, there was actually fresh political challenge, but a challenge that came from within his own community. This time it was not the familiar dissidents in Bombay and Karachi, but people who had formed the Khoja liberal societies in East Africa, where immigrant Khojas had been the most loyal and the most disciplined of the Aga's followers. That summer, anonymous pamphlets began to circulate, attacking the Aga and his mode of living and demanding his abdication, significantly not in favour of Aly, but Sadruddin. Pamphlets issued in the name of 'Ismailia League' had seized on the fact that the Aga's platinum jubilee celebrations in East Africa were due. The pamphlets also criticized the wealthy local leaders of the community and alleged that the great diamond jubilee investment trust was for the benefit of the rich alone.

The Aga's supporters argued that the trust was not a charitable affair but was really intended to make good commercial loans at low interest to those who could use them. They also suggested that these anonymous attacks were the work of the Hindus seeking to spread discord among themselves. No confirmation of this was ever produced and there was some evidence to suggest East African dissidents were influenced by others in Pakistan. Some time before the pamphlets were issued, a young 'Westernized' Pakistani had attacked Aly in a Cairo hotel, claiming that the Pakistani's father had paid the Aga £100,000 on a promise that the Aga would see to it that he got to Paradise after death; this same Pakistani was later reported to have organized the anonymous campaign against the Aga's followers. Whatever the real origins of the campaign — and these have never been discovered — the Aga acted swiftly. He called another conference of his followers from East Africa at Evian and announced that East Africa could no longer be treated as one territory. Five territorial supreme councils would be set up: in Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika, Madagascar and Portuguese East Africa. There would be a federal council at Mombasa and individual councils would be responsible for the educational, social and economic interests in their individual countries.

He also chose an old solution that had been used by his grandfather when faced by the dissidents in Bombay nearly a century before. All Khoja followers of the Aga Khan would be required to sign a declaration of loyalty. The Ismaili leaders returned from Evian to their countries and immediately set to work. In Kenya, the Ismaili Association called on the Government of East Africa to institute 'immediate investigations into the identities of persons responsible for the vilification of an entire community', which, declared the Association, 'was gravely endangering public peace.' Nearly, 4,000 Aga Khan followers attended a meeting and declared the 'anonymous and subversive pamphlet' to have been written under fictitious names and was the work of a bogus organization. The Association reaffirmed its loyalty to the Aga and advised the community to keep calm under all provocation and to await the result of official action.

But the Aga realized that the main problem was not so much his life style

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which, after all, his followers had known, endured and evidently approved of for very nearly fifty years. It was more the fear of what, or who, was to follow him. As a significant pointer he decided to send not Aly but Aly's sons, Karim aged eighteen and Amyn, a year younger, to East Africa on behalf of the Aga. They were to inaugurate a new constitution for the community and confer the titles the Aga had bestowed on some of his followers in his own version of the Queen's Honours list. No doubt the Aga saw this as a test of how the young ones would fare. The tour must have reassured him for by the end of it the loyalty of his East African followers was not in doubt. There had been a few malcontents, but they were hardly visible.

The Aga made a television appearance in June 1954 in which he projected himself as the last great survivor of the Victorian era. When journalists asked him who was the most outstanding personality he had ever met he declared: Queen Victoria. When asked what fascinated him about racing he answered: breeding, breeding, breeding — but the Aga's accent made it sound as though he was saying breathing, breathing, breathing.

Only a couple of months later illness again claimed him. By August 1954 he was so badly afflicted by lumbago and sciatica that he was, as he confessed to Beaverbrook, a virtual cripple and could barely walk two yards. His letters to Beaverbrook were now all about the pain and illness that racked his body. Very often the letters were typed, but when handwritten, the writing was ever more spidery, zig-zagging across the page, the letters half completed, the words slurring into one another.

In September he suffered an attack of bronchitis and on 11th September one of France's foremost heart specialists, Dr Henri Degene, was summoned to Cannes by Yvette, alarmed by the serious turn in his condition. Within a day the Aga was on the mend, and soon thinking of travelling to his island home at Aswan in the middle of the Nile. The plan was that the Aga would proceed from there to Kampala in Uganda where he would be weighed on special electric scales in the new three-storey Jamat Khana.

But in Egypt the Aga fell ill again and Aly flew out on 4th January 1955 to join his father. He arrived the next day and took up residence at the Cataract Hotel in Cairo. Aly joined the correspondents who generally covered the Aga and what was called 'his circus', who had gathered to record the latest events. Everybody wanted to know was this the end, or nearly the end? Who would succeed the Aga?

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The *Daily Express*, because of the Aga-Beaverbrook connection, had always felt close to the Khoja leader and their correspondent decided to do a bit of snooping. He approached Aly for an interview which was readily granted. The journalist was delighted to discover how open and loquacious Aly was. All of his questions were meant to find out if Aly was really going to succeed the Aga, and all Aly's answers were meant to prove that he was indeed the successor. The next few hours were probably the most agonizing

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Aly had ever spent for after he had spoken to the *Daily Express* he was invited by the Aga to go for a drive.

As they drove round the Aswan golf course, Aly confided to the Aga that he had spoken to the *Daily Express* man. The Aga was furious. Succession was his prerogative and he demanded that Aly ensure that the interview was never printed. Next morning Aly met the journalist and pleaded with him to try to get the story stopped, but it was already too late and the following day Aly issued the routine give-away comment that reports of a 'supposed statement of his on the succession to his father, the Aga Khan, as leader of the Muslim Ismaili Sect were false and malicious.' Aly subsequently tried to rectify the damage and deny the statement as often and vociferously as he could. Whereas two and a half years before the Aga had himself told American reporters that 'of course he [Aly] is going to succeed me,' things were now very different. Even the *Daily Express* journalist found that despite the interview he was not shunned, but courted by the Aga and Yvette, the Aga seeming to suggest that Aly was to blame for the whole mess.

The Aga was still hoping to go to East Africa for his platinum jubilee celebrations and told his community that although the doctors had advised him to take two or three months' rest they should always be prepared for a sudden announcement of a visit to East Africa. On 2nd February, East Africans heard that the Aga would not be making the trip after all. The scales, specially built with rich canopies for the ceremony, would be preserved for the community. The ceremony itself, on a much smaller scale, would be held in Cairo on 20th February, but as the date drew near, even that became doubtful. On 11th February the Aga was still suffering from bronchitis and the ceremony on the 20th was cancelled. However, within three days,the Aga was once again on the mend. The medical bulletin reported that his chest infection was improving and his heart was in a satisfactory condition.

The 20th February celebrations were on once again and did take place — although only a sixth of the expected 600 followers were present. In the hall of the Semiramis Hotel, the Aga, flanked by Yvette and Aly, sat in a gilded chair. The weighing ceremony was discarded but ornamental scales were placed in the hall. Instead, the Aga was given a cheque for £300,000, which was estimated to be the value of the Aga's weight in platinum. The Aga immediately announced that it would be used to help heads of families in the lower income groups to buy their own homes. Again, not charity but help with low-cost homes.

On 28th May 1955 the Aga left for Yakimour. A month later he was at Buckingham Palace as the Queen invested him with the insignia of a Knight Grand Cross of the Order of St Michael and St George which had been conferred upon him in the New Year Honours' List of that year. Afterwards, the Aga and Yvette stayed on to have lunch with the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh.

Some time before that the Aga had paid a quick visit to Paris and his lawyers and, having looked his will over, he re-deposited it with Lloyd's Bank. This was to prove the crucial will, although nobody would know the

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contents for some time yet. By the summer of 1955 he seemed to have fully recovered from the illnesses of the winter, and was now full of life and vigour. He did not even seem to mind the publicity surrounding the model Bettina, Aly's new girlfriend, the girl who had shown the trousseau to Rita Hayworth all those years before.

In July 1955 the Aga took a house near Ascot for the traditional royal week. He even allowed himself to be interviewed by a *Daily Express* correspondent about the magic cure he had found for gout: 'wearing white silk pyjamas and a woolly undervest.' He told the correspondent that a year ago his hands had been swollen to three times their normal size, bright red with spots all over them. He had been in agony. Though he avoided port, which was supposed to cause gout, he confessed, 'I must have committed all the other sins which produce it — eating too much wheat and other grain, dried peas and big white beans.' But now he proudly held up his hands to the correspondent; they were small, well manicured and without swelling or even a blemish. The miracle had been achieved by the wonder drug Benemide, a new drug made by an American company. The Aga was happy for the *Daily Express* to give publicity to the drug, but he did warn his readers the drug was relatively new — four years old — and, he alleged, highly dangerous.

By the winter of 1955-56 the Aga was planning another trip to Egypt. Beaverbrook had tempted him with the West Indies — the two friends invariably headed in different directions every winter, the Beaver westwards, the Aga eastwards; and 'why don't you come east?' 'Why not come to the West Indies?' had long been part of the Aga-Beaver relationship. Though the Aga had always wanted to go to the West Indies, Aswan was now the centre of his last remaining dream. He had decided that he wanted to be buried there, and had some sort of idea he might establish his own Ismaili state there. The dreams he had pursued with Willingdon and Linlithgow had not died, they had merely taken a different shape. However impossible they had been, to the Aga the mere thought of having his own state at Aswan was intoxicating. It would mean the recreation, in however emasculated a form, of the Fatamid Egyptian state which had existed almost a millenium ago, and was the pride and glory of the Ismailis; a glory that the Aga had often invoked to justify the richness of his heritage. We don't know what steps he took to try and acquire such a state, for in Nasser's Egypt it must have been extremely difficult to argue that the religious leader of a heretical Muslim sect be granted statehood in an island on the Nile. Many years later the Aga's accountant and book-keeper, Pierally Ramoutulla, disclosed in a Paris court that four-fifths of the money gathered from followers were to be used to acquire such an Ismaili state at Aswan.

This trip was to be grander than the one the previous winter, Somerset Maugham was invited — as thanks for his preface — and before the trip the Aga presented Nasser with 1,500 Egyptian pounds to boost Egypt's Arms Fund. Aswan provided both a warm climate and a very congenial atmosphere. The Aga had acquired a flat-roofed white house on the edge of the West Bank of the Nile, below a hill on which he planned his tomb would

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be built. But as in the previous winter, the Aga returned from Egypt a sick man. When he arrived back at Nice airport on 15th February 1956, he was carried on a stretcher and departed in an ambulance for Yakimour. Yvette confessed that her husband's health was 'not so good'. However, there was something in the South of France's spring weather that revived the Aga. By mid-May, George Criticos had got his usual order to send mangoes to Max Beaverbrook (and the others on the Aga's usual mango list) and though Beaverbrook must have received such mangoes almost every year for more than thirty years he still managed to sound very excited about them: 'What a wonderful present. I counted the lot, and I must say that never in my life have I been in possession of so many *good* mangoes. Where, oh where, do you get them? And what is the secret?'

Soon the Aga was sufficiently recovered to think about his investments. The *Daily Express* and other papers had reported the political battle then going on in Ottawa about some Canadian pipelines, and the Aga wanted Beaverbrook's advice about whether he should buy shares in the pipeline. Beaverbrook thought the politics of it all made it very speculative. For the Aga, aware the end could not be very far away, any investment, however speculative, was better than accumulating cash. Cash, in the form of religious dues from his followers, kept piling up and, as he confessed to Beaverbrook on 30th May 1956, 'the trouble with me is that cash reserves are up and fairly young boys, if I die, may have evil instincts. I don't believe in trust, etc. so like to every year at least have a lock-up.'

By June 1956 he was exchanging lengthy letters with Captain Liddell Hart about the causes of the Second World War. Liddell Hart had spoke at an Athenaeum dinner on the subject and had sent the Aga a copy of his speech. The Aga made his familiar point that Hitler had ignored Northern Africa and the Middle East at his peril. He planned to write a paper along these lines and send a copy of it to Anthony Eden.

The previous year Liddell Hart had made a longer survey of the Second World War which was supposed to be the basis for a film to be called *Storm over the World*, planned by a Berlin film company. But though much progress had been made, at the last minute the directing producer of the film had fallen out with the head of the company and left. Liddell Hart was hoping that the Aga might finance the film project.

Suddenly, on 1st July, the Aga had a nervous breakdown. Doctors advised complete rest, until at least the spring or the summer of 1957. On 21st September 1956, the Aga wrote to Liddell Hart expressing his regret that he could not follow up the Captain's suggestion and returned his papers. Within three months, however, much of the Aga's old vigour had returned, or so it seemed. Britain had just experienced the traumatic Suez crisis and the Aga could hardly stay silent. On 6th December 1956, writing from Yakimour, the Aga told Beaverbrook that he was 'bursting with indignation at the incomparable folly' about 'this foolish Middle East business.' The Aga was only too well aware of the financial effects of Suez. His bankers in Switzerland had told him that even if he wanted to unload sterling he would not find buyers for that currency. He was simply furious

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with the British Cabinet that they had forgotten all the old diplomatic skills of the First World War and the Second World War that had enabled Britain to act in concert with Russia and America.

The shock of Suez must have been considerable, for reversing a whole lifetime's work the Aga now dismissed the entire Middle East. Now, he told Beaverbrook, public opinion in England and France over-estimated the importance of the Middle East: 'were it not for the oil in these countries it wouldn't be worth the trouble for anybody to try and conquer them — even the Russians wouldn't try. One half of the oil could be controlled by a few gunboats.' In an amazing, and quick, review he dismissed all the countries involved in the area. Kuwait, Bahrain and the Sheikhdoms of the Persian Gulf could be totally controlled by the Navy who could take the oil out. Jordan had only a million people, of whom only 200,000 were Jordanians. Saudia Arabia was the most backward country in the world. 'My wife, who has been there on a pilgrimage, has told me that the poverty of the masses is terrible, and without slavery their normal life probably would collapse.' Yemen, though a beautiful country, could only be developed if Europeans settled there — then it might be better than Switzerland since it didn't have so violent a climate. 'Syria, with which I am connected and where I am losing money with this beastly government they have, is throttling the cotton trade.' Apart from cotton, Syria had nothing — it was neither big enough in size, nor in population. How then, the Aga wondered, had Britain managed to produce such a debacle at Suez? 'Has everybody else gone mad, or am I the madman?'

Beaverbrook was too long in the tooth to try and answer that question, and preferred the diplomatic answer of delight at receiving a letter from an old friend. The Aga, himself, seemed to be back to very nearly his best. In a few weeks he was writing to *The Times* of yet another plan for saving British racing. France had saved its racing through a Tote monopoly, and the Aga thought 'the Government could save British racing and breeding by introducing a Tote monopoly on the lines recommended by the Thoroughbred Breeders' Association, which allows absorbing bookmakers and their employees within the Tote, but no loss of employment takes place.'

In June, the Aga planned to visit London to open the new Ismaili Club and residential centre he had acquired, but in March he informed the Club's President that he would not perhaps be well enough to attend and might not arrive until July. Within a month, however, medical bulletins began to emerge from Yakimour. The Aga's doctor, Dr Stehelim, had been joined by Professor Laport, a Paris specialist, and on 7th April they told the world, 'The Aga Khan has had a recurrence of broncho-pulmonary trouble, with a rise in temperature. His heart and kidneys are satisfactory. His condition is a little better than the previous day, and his temperature was low tonight.'

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Already there had been speculation that the Aga might be succeeded by his younger son Sadruddin. Five years before, when journalists had come to interview the Aga, Sadruddin had to tell them that no, he was not interested

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in the succession, he wasn't eligible, and he was not like Aly Khan his brother, but a lot younger — and different. Now, in May 1957, in a long interview with Art Buchwald, writing in his more unfamiliar role as a straight journalist, rather than as a humorist, Sadruddin seemed to leave open the chance of succession. He knew, he told Buchwald, that his father had decided who was going to succeed him, and there was no point in discussing it. 'We all feel anything father has decided is best, and his decision should be accepted unquestionably.' It was tough, admitted Sadruddin, to be Aly's younger brother.

> Every time the press writes about me, they refer to me as Aly's kid brother. If I go to a nightclub with a girl, they say I am a chip off the old block, if I give money to Harvard, they say it proves I am quite different from my brother. I hope I do something soon so I can rise above my family connection. I would like to be Sadri Khan in my own right.

But outside the headlines, Sadruddin had been wooing a girl very similar to the type that Aly fell for. During the Harvard summer holidays of 1956, Sadruddin had met Nina Dyer and fallen in love with her. Nina could have been the sort of woman who might have come straight out of Aly's entourage. She had been born in Ceylon where her father had been a tea planter, had been educated in South Africa, had become a model in London and Paris and was now a divorcee. The romance had rather angered the Aga, who feared that like Aly, Sadruddin would find himself at the hands of lawyers, paying out expensive divorce settlements. But in the end the Aga relented and Sadruddin summoned the press to Andrée's villa to announce his engagement to Nina Dyer. The wedding was fixed for 15th July.

Aly had good reason to be amused by Sadruddin's activities. The past year seemed to have marked a renaissance in his relations with his father. Just under a year before, he had undertaken an extensive tour of East Africa at the end of which *The Sunday Times* had reported that 'the fact that he has forsaken his normal haunts to undertake this trip is being interpreted by the faithful as being a sure sign that he will definitely be chosen to succeed his father.' Although in May 1957 Aly had to sell a collection of fifty-two drawings, watercolours and paintings, thus fetching some £110,000 to meet his gambling debts — at a well-publicized auction at the Galerie Carpentier in Paris — this did not seem to affect his father quite as much as had his other publicized activities in the past.

Aly's romance with Bettina had also been progressing. Although Bettina had met Aly in the company of Rita Hayworth and Gene Tierney, it was one June evening in 1955, when visiting her friend Françoise de Langlade, Vogue's fashion editor, that she really met Aly. Later, Bettina would feel that all her life had been a preparation for Aly. Born in Brittany, she moved quite early in her life to Elbeuf, a small Normandy town, a move felt necessary by Bettina's mother to avoid gossip about her husband, who had left her when Bettina was very young. Then had followed Bettina's own departure to Paris, her acquisition of a modelling career, of the very name

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Bettina — her real name was Simone — and the unsatisfactory love affairs. By the time she really met Aly she was ready for a great adventure in her life.

In many ways, Aly had gone back to his father's standards. Bettina shared many of the French small-town qualities that had been a feature of Andrée Carron and Yvette Labrouse. For Bettina to make Aly the centre of her world was the most natural thing; it justified her every action and the very purpose of her existence. She had been a model, and a very successful one, but she did not allow the values of modelling to supplant those instilled in her as a child in Elbeuf. Thus, when Aly insisted that even in front of her saleswomen and chief dressmaker, Bettina wore a long petticoat and a brassière, she readily consented, and later the very thought of a masseur or a male doctor attending Bettina threw Aly into a frenzy. The French model interpreted the jealousy as a certain distinctive Oriental respect for women. The fact that Bettina would have to take her mother or a woman friend with her to see a male doctor meant, to Bettina, that 'this was his truly Oriental way of manifesting the great respect he felt towards the women he had chosen. He was shy when it came to expressing his emotions, but capable of great outbursts of jealousy.'

Even when Aly publicly humiliated her in front of Kim Novak, Bettina still found it easy to justify his actions. Kim Novak had come to Cannes to publicize *Picnic* and Aly was dancing with her when Bettina, left alone, was approached by an escort of Ginger Rogers, who also happened to be at the party. Bettina agreed, but when she returned to her table Aly was furious. In retaliation, Aly danced again with Kim Novak and then went off to gamble until the early hours of the morning. Bettina cried her heart out but eventually accepted Aly's terms: Aly would dance with other women, but Bettina must never dance with another man. When Bettina feebly pointed out the contradiction Aly shouted at her, saying 'that's not the same at all. You ought to promise me you never will again.' Bettina never did, not even with Lord Carnarvon, who was older than Aly by about twenty years, and did not think he could be a serious rival to him at all.

Later, when Aly went on a trip to India leaving Bettina with some friends in Egypt, she would realize how Eastern she had become — and her transformation pleased her. Before Aly, she thought, she had had the life of an independent woman. But she had been lonely, horribly lonely, and now she realized,

> a woman can only give of her best when she forms part of a couple, and she is only really happy to the extent that she feels herself to be indispensable to a man. Naturally, the happiness I experienced with Aly was not to be had without certain pain. I hated to see him so seductive to other women, but felt certain that in time he would tire of these facile conquests and that my happiness would then be untainted.

Crucially, perhaps because of her background, Bettina got on with the women who mattered in Aly's life: Marie Louise, Aly's housekeeper in

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Paris, and Yvette who could relate to Bettina better than she could to the American girlfriends that Aly had courted in the past. At one Aly party in Monte Carlo the rapport was so great that the two women behaved as though they were two young friends, rather than prospective mother and daughter-in-law.

In November 1955 there had been reports in the press that Aly would soon marry Bettina. The Paris court was shortly to hear and give its official approval to Aly and Rita's Reno divorce, and to the family the idea of Bettina becoming Aly's wife was neither surprising nor strange. Although they did not get married then, he would often tell Bettina, or Zine as he called her, about the shape of things to come when they did get married. At one time in 1957 Aly had even taken Bettina to Syria to meet his devoted followers there and the Aga, when talking about Bettina to Aly, would almost invariably refer to her as 'your wife'. One Christmas, the Aga and Yvette had even given Bettina a clip from Cartier, much to the shock and delight of Aly, who proudly showed it to his sons Karim and Amyn and his brother Sadri. All of this seemed to suggest Aly's tortured romantic past was behind him. Rita Hayworth and Gene Tierney had been forgotten. The Aga was ready to forgive his eldest son.

However, though this fact did not become significant until later, Karim was also down from Harvard and with the Aga in the summer of 1957. The Aga was being nursed at his home in Yakimour, and Karim came to stay near the villa — not at it. He spent most of his time there being educated in the intricacies of the Aga's business and community work.

By mid-June, the Aga seemed to have recovered sufficiently to travel to Paris. (See illustration, page 237.) But there, as a member of the household put it, 'four days of absolutely tropical heat — worse than Bombay,' caused a setback, and on 18th June 1957 he was flown to Geneva and taken to his lakeside villa at Versoix, a Geneva suburb. The previous August the Aga had been finally given a permit to settle permanently in the country. The years of limited pursuits, ranging from one week to a few months were over — and Switzerland was now his proper legal residence, his tax domicile and the place where he wanted to be when the end came.

Once again the Aga was clearly a sick man and had now lost something like a hundred pounds in weight. The man who loved his food so much and had eaten so prodigiously over the years had no appetite left. But his mind was still alert and, despite the suffering, he was adamant there should be a huge reception to honour his eightieth birthday. The Aga insisted that Constance Hope, a public relations woman who had helped him and who was visiting France should travel to Geneva and advise about the forthcoming birthday reception. To sweeten matters further, his beloved granddaughter Yasmin arrived on her first proper visit to France since Rita Hayworth had taken her and Rebecca away that night in 1950 just as the Aga and Yvette arrived back from India. Aly drove Yasmin to the Villa Barakat and later told reporters how much the sight of his granddaughter had uplifted the Aga.

Bettina had also spent a few minutes at the Aga's bedside, and returned a

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bit disturbed. Although the Aga was finding it difficult to express himself, he made it clear to Yvette that he thought Bettina would make a very good wife for Aly. 'Why isn't he married already? Why? He must get married!' But all these were palliatives. The Aga was sinking and as family and doctors gathered round there was not much talk. The night of 10th July seemed endless. The doctors were convinced that the Aga had only a few hours to live. In the morning, the driveway of the villa filled with cars; a police car parked at the gates of the villa, where the crowds and reporters were milling. At 12.40 a.m. on 11th July the Aga's heart stopped, just a few weeks short of his eightieth birthday.

The death certificate would put it as heart failure, complicated by cancer and jaundice. One moment the door to the Aga's bedroom was ajar, the next it was shut to allow his close family to mourn him quietly. One of his followers was allowed into the room to bow before his body, recite a long prayer and cover everything bar the face with a long white shroud before the embalmers began the long, necessary process. The news had already been broadcast and Miss Merioneth Whitaker and the Aga's former secretary, Freda Blair, came to the gate and announced 'His Highness has died'.

Bettina was waiting with Nina Dyer in an adjacent room and as they heard the sobs, and guessed, Bettina could not help but recall a conversation she had had with the Aga not all that long ago. Aly was then touring the Aga's followers in the East. A speech he had made in Pakistan had appeared in an English newspaper. The Aga rang to compliment Aly on the speech, but to Bettina he seemed to want to dwell on Karim's qualities. Karim had had a very good education, said the Aga, and a very full religious training; he was a serious-minded boy. 'He'd make a good Aga'. Aly was intelligent but lived too dangerously. Bettina should stop him. Of course, said the Aga, Karim was young and could be easily influenced. The coversation left Bettina uneasy. It seemed to suggest very clearly that the Aga had made up his mind that it wasn't going to be Aly.

While the family waited, the world paid tribute to the Aga. *The Times* headlined its obituary 'A Citizen of the World'; the *Guardian* preferred 'A Monarch Without Territory'. In addition to long, detailed life-sketches, both newspapers ran editorials, seeing his death as the passing of an age. The Aga was the most famous contemporary Indian, thought *The Times* obituarist, while its editorial opinion was that 'the picturesque and friendly figure of the Aga Khan will be sadly missed in many diverse circles of Western society.' The *Guardian*'s leader writer saw the Aga as 'a strange figure' of the twentieth century. It drew attention to the contrast between the Aga as racehorse owner and the Aga as spiritual leader who 'took seriously his duties as benefactor of his community and equipped a remarkable chain of schools, hospitals and benevolent societies.' *The Times* editorial had pointedly speculated who the successor might be, reminding its readers that it need not follow that the eldest son would necessarily succeed. On the afternoon of 12th July, the family gathered at the villa to hear the will, brought down from Lloyd's Bank in London by Otto Giesen, a solicitor with the London firm of Slaughter and May. It revealed the unique

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world the Aga had created. The very first paragraph indicated that the Aga's estate would be governed by Shia Moslem law, which was also 'my personal law in force for all members of the Shia Moslem Ismailian community in my country of origin, Pakistan.' The will gave details of his marriages, including the 'Muta' version to Theresa, and then came the crucial paragraph.

It was the Imam's right to choose his successor from among his descendants, at his absolute and unfettered discretion, and:

> In these circumstances, and in view of the fundamentally altered conditions in the world in very recent years, and the great changes which have taken place including the discovery of atomic science, I am convinced that it is in the best interests of the Shia Moslem Ismailian Community that I be succeeded by a young man who has been brought up and developed during recent years in the midst of the new age and who will bring a new outlook on life to his office of Imam. For this reason, although he is not now one of my heirs, I appoint my grandson Karim, son of my son Aly Salomone Khan, to succeed to the title of Aga Khan and be the Imam and Pir of all my Shia Ismaili followers....

The will had been made on 25th May 1955 — during that quick trip to Paris before the investiture ceremony in June 1955 — and there was a codicil dated 18th June 1957. This did not alter anything; it merely reconfirmed what had gone before. Aly had got the right to buy the horses he owned in partnership with the Aga, and there were various other bequests, but the main issue which had created so much suspense and mystery in the last few years was now settled: Aly's son, Karim, was the new Aga Khan. (See illustration, page 238.) His grandfather's desire was that

> my successor shall during the first seven years of his Imamate be guided on questions of general Imamate policy by my third wife, Yvette, called Yve Blanche Labruse, the Begum Aga Khan, who has been familiar for many years with the problems facing my followers and in whose judgement I place the greatest confidence....

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Chapter 37

From A to K

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If the Aga had managed to sustain the suspense to the end, the news management of Karim's succession was not quite so well handled. Yvette had been receiving leaders of the Ismaili community all day, and had assured them that they would be the first to be notified of the successor early the next morning — a Saturday. But by Friday evening, just a few hours after the will had been read, the story had leaked to American correspondents. Aware of the romance of a Harvard undergraduate becoming the leader of a supposedly vast Moslem following, they quickly swooped on Karim. He had just heard the news in the afternoon, and confessed that 'it was a complete surprise. None of us knew until my father made the announcement to the family.'

The Ismaili leaders were feeling a bit like Cabinet Ministers who first hear in public the news that they expect to know in private. This may have contributed to the confusion of the first few days. In Karachi, Pakistan was surprised not only at the choice of Karim but the way the news had been dealt with and, almost immediately after the announcement of the death of the Aga, a rally of several thousand of Syria's Ismailis held at Salamieh, central Syria, decided to claim Aly as their leader. Later, a biographer of Aly, keen to portray him as a lost leader, seized on this as a major revolt, threatening the type of split that had divided the Shias in the past. It was nothing of the sort. Within a day, a member of the Syrian community, whose number had also grown mysteriously within 24 hours from the previously announced 50,000 to 65,000, declared that they accepted Karim as the new Aga. They had assumed Aly would succeed his father; now they were ready to 'unquestionably abide' by the late Aga's will.

On 14th July, while Aga III's body was still being slowly embalmed at the Villa Baraket, Karim was formally presented by Begum Yvette to members of the Ismaili sect as Aga Khan IV. There was Sir Eboo Pirbhai, representative of the late Aga in Africa; his wife, Lady Pirbhai; and Ismailis from Pakistan, India, Malaya, Singapore and Madagascar and elsewhere. The new Aga declared 'my religious responsibilities begin today'. After the formal presentation, Yvette withdrew and Karim came onto the lawn, surrounded by his followers, and sat in a white satin Louis XVI chair. As the photographers clicked away and the reporters surrounded him and

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began to ask questions, many could sense that the nineteen-year-old felt it was a bit of an ordeal. He answered questions calmly, apparently undecided whether he would return to Harvard and continue his studies with his room-mate, John Fell Stevenson, son of Adlai. He had no interest in horse racing and would leave it for the moment to his father. Otherwise, he made all the right noises. He told *The Times* correspondent that his main mission would be to extend and complete the social work of his grandfather. Aga III had wanted to see every Ismaili have his own house by 1960, and Aga IV thought that the funds were available for carrying out such a project.

On 17th July, a specially chartered DC6-B Swissair plane took the Aga's body, covered in a white satin shroud, and Karim, Aly and Yvette to Aswan in Egypt. There it was placed in the villa that the Aga had often lived in, awaiting burial in the mausoleum that was being constructed on the hill overlooking the villa. It was known as the Shore of the Dead, where the great Egyptian Pharaohs and the Fatamid rulers had been buried. Aga III had laid down detailed instructions to ensure that even if he had never been a Pharaoh he would be buried like one. It would be two years before the mausoleum was complete and for the Aga to find his final resting place. By then Karim had emerged both from the shadow of Yvette and of his father. Soon after the Aswan funeral of the old Aga, Aly flew to Beirut and then Syria, to experience the intoxicating adorations of his Ismaili followers and to calm some of them who had wanted to proclaim him Imam. It was never a very serious threat but to be with them and to witness their fervour once again did much to soothe him.

In August, nearly all the family gathered at the Woking mosque for one of the many memorial ceremonies for Aga III. A marquee had to be erected next to the mosque to accommodate the mourners. Behind the marquee, sightseers in jeans and cotton frocks and holding cameras, recorded the arrivals and departures: Karim, in a morning suit and astrakhan hat; Aly holding his right hand inside his jacket à la Napoleon; Sadruddin looking very dapper, with his newly married wife Nina Dyer. Karim's decision not to serve tea and biscuits after the memorial service was considered a sensation, and the *News Chronicle* headlined the story 'The Aga breaks Moslem custom — no tea after the service.'

Karim had already paid a brief visit to Uganda. It was in October 1957 that he began a series of long, elaborate travels in East Africa, India and Pakistan to instal him formally as the new Imam. In Dar-es-Salaam on Saturday, 19th October 1957, before an estimated 50,000 people — including Mr Lennox-Boyd, Secretary of State for the Colonies, W. L. Gorell Barnes of the Colonial Office, Sir Edward Twining, Governor of Tanganyika and his wife, and other dignitaries — Karim was installed as Aga Khan IV. He was on the same dais which his grandfather, Aga Khan III, had mounted in 1946 to be weighed in diamonds. Now, as then, there were Ismaili bands playing, not always in unison; one had come specially from Pakistan. This time the new Aga spoke not of the gifts of money he had received, but of the atomic age that they were living in. In the next few months the Aga was installed in various parts of East Africa and

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the Indian subcontinent. The only hitch came in Buganda. Nobody other than the ruling Kabaka could be installed in a public place, so the Aga's ceremony had to be performed in a mosque.

Yvette had not accompanied Karim, Aly or Joan, Karim's mother, to the installation ceremonies. Instead, just four days before Karim was installed at Dar-es-Salaam she gave an extensive interview to John Smeaton of the *Sunday Express*. The interview made it clear that Yvette still saw herself as the power behind the new Aga. 'He is not bound to take my advice, but he would be very foolish if he didn't.' The Aga's will had directed that the Begum was to guide Karim for seven years, and the former beauty queen now said,

> to me, a will is a sacred document. It would not be in Karim's interests to ignore my husband's wishes in this respect. I have been serving Karim and the Ismaili community in this way for three months now, just as I served when my husband was alive. Now that my husband is dead, I think I can rightly say that I have more knowledge and more insight on the Ismaili problems than anyone else. That is the reason why my husband inserted in his will his desire that I should guide Karim.

This was not a wife in mourning: she wore a cream Balmain dress, a few pieces of jewellery, and said she was following her husband's wishes in not wearing black. No, she told Smeaton, there had been no question of even considering Sadruddin as a successor.There had not even been 'a remote possibility'.

> I know nothing about his personal feelings on the matter, nor do I care about them. But I do know that he was never considered as a possible successor. Apart from anything else, the successor should be either the eldest son or the eldest son of the eldest son.

As far as Aly was concerned, Yvette explained that the old Aga had 'felt that as he had reigned for so long, it would be best if he jumped a generation. Aly is forty-six and is set in his ways. It might be difficult for a man of his age to change his way of life.' It had nothing to do with Aly's romances or his proposed marriage to Bettina.

If Karim agonised about this power behind the throne, he said nothing publicly, but a break was not very far away. It came sixteen months later — when at last the Aga Khan's Pharaoh-like mausoleum was ready on the Nile. Aga III's body was to be removed from the temporary tomb to which it had been consigned soon after his death, and reburied in the mausoleum. Three thousand of the Aga's followers were to walk behind the coffin and Yvette wanted to be one of them. Neither Karim, nor Sadruddin, nor the family lawyer Slaki Hashem, much liked the idea. The ceremony was to take place on Friday 1st February 1959 and at 9 p.m. the previous evening a long meeting started in the Aga's villa between Yvette, Karim, Sadruddin and Slaki Hashem.

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It was 3 a.m. when the meeting ended. A compromise had been reached. Yvette would wait outside the mausoleum until the procession was just fifteen yards away. Then she would step forward and walk beside Karim. This was not the only point of difference: Yvette wanted the burial to start at 4 p.m.; Karim wanted it to take place immediately after the Friday noon prayers, which normally ended at 2 p.m. Once again, there was a compromise and it was agreed that the procession should start at 3 p.m.

While the new Imam and his step-grandmother negotiated outside, the Aga Khan's three thousand followers were enjoying themselves, watching Oriental dancers hired by an entertainment committee appointed by Karim himself. When the procession started exactly at 3 p.m., the coffin was carried on the shoulders of eight mourners — all wearing white — and four undertakers, some of the mourners having travelled from India. The barbers in the Aswan area and many miles around had been very busy on the morning of the burial. Many of the 3,000 mourners accommodated in camps had had to shave off their beards, since Ismaili custom required that no bearded man could walk in the procession behind the coffin. Yvette herself had to agree not to use lipstick or powder for twenty-four hours before or after the burial.

The mausoleum had been finished two days before the ceremony, built with 500 tons of granite, 100 tons of white marble imported from Italy, 10,000 tons of stones and 1,000 tons of cement. Just after it had been completed, Yvette stood on the steps and threw a hundred gold sovereigns to the workers, a gesture that might have come out of medieval times and led to the workers fighting for hours over the coins.

At exactly 3.30 p.m. the burial procession reached the mausoleum, and Karim opened the coffin and kissed his grandfather's forehead. He invited the followers to take a last look at the face, which seemed no different than on the day he had died. After the burial was over, Karim placed a herb on the top of the coffin — a herb which was meant to give the mausoleum a sweet smell for 2,000 years. Everything had been done just as the ancient Pharaohs might have wished it.

Yvette, however, found the heat overpowering and could not endure to wait outside the mausoleum. Instead, she entered the mausoleum and waited in front of the tomb for the body to arrive. But, although later she would explain she had respected Muslim custom and that there had been no disagreement with Karim, her behaviour — while the Aga was being laid to rest — marked the proper breach between her and Karim. For a few more years Yvette would continue to present herself as the power behind the throne. As late as May 1962, she would tell friends that she longed to 'retire, but could not do this until Karim took a wife.' That, she seemed to suggest, would not be easy because the new wife would always have to play a subsidiary role to the Aga. But such stories were more whistling in the wind rather than anything else, for by then Aly was dead and Karim, who had started in the blaze of playboy glory reflecting the image of Aly, was settling down to his more contemporary role of the shrewd, hard businessman. He knew how to make money and keep out of the news.

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For Aly, the world had changed. The loss of the succession had been a massive blow. He had never really believed that his father would not nominate him. Those first few traumatic weeks had only been made bearable by the daily drama of Karim's succession, the flight to Aswan for the burial, and the journey to Syria to become the people's Imam — if only for a short time. After that there was only his racing, his women — though he was tied more and more to Bettina — and, amazingly, a political job: the sort of job his father would have loved. Six months after his father's death, in November 1957, Aly met President Iskander Mirza of Pakistan and was offered a job as the country's spokesman at the United Nations. The formal announcement was made on 6th February 1958, a fortnight after Karim's formal installation ceremony at Karachi.

For many, the appointment was hardly believable. The *Pakistan Times* described it as 'a fantastic choice' and a cartoon visualized Aly arriving in the UN in baby rompers, sucking a pacifier, with a female doll under one arm and a toy horse in the other. The appointment did, however, make some political sense. Henry Cabot Lodge, then the American representative at the United Nations, was an influential figure and a man who had recently directed aid to India. Ever since its formation, Pakistan's foreign strategy had been to combat its bigger neighbour, India. Although Pakistan had become fairly allied to Western military blocks like the South East Asia Treaty Organization — SEATO — or the Cento Pact that brought Turkey and other Middle Eastern countries together, she still felt that in America she did not have the voice or the glamour that the Indians possessed. Aly was friendly with Cabot Lodge and had served with him in the American Sixth Army group in the South of France after D-Day. In fact, Aly had consulted Lodge before accepting the appointment. Should he accept? He had no training for this sort of thing. Lodge had reassured him that if he surrounded himself with competent advisers he would find the experience both interesting and valuable.

The idea of having a celebrity as part of the UN delegation was not new. That year the Americans had appointed Irene Dunne, the film star, as part of its delegation to the General Assembly. And, whatever the other consequences of Aly as UN leader, the Pakistanis soon discovered that invitations to the famous Aly Khan's parties were most prized at the United Nations. Overall, the effect of Aly at the UN was negligible although, briefly, it had attracted attention and some favourable comment. There was the profile of Aly in the prestigious 'Man in the News' slot in the *New York Times*: Playboy to Statesman. His restatement of Pakistan's support for the Western policy in the Middle East at the time of the Lebanese crisis of 1958 was well received.

The West was trying to build up figures to oppose Gamal Abdul Nasser, established as the bogeyman of the West, and Aly was seen as a possible candidate. When Aly repeated Pakistan's support for President Eisenhower's despatch of men and troops to the Lebanon in August 1958, *The Daily Telegraph* shrewdly picked out a passage in his speech which, without mentioning Nasser, attacked Nasserism: 'the main issue is whether

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after years of foreign domination the weaker nations, who have but recently attained their independence, shall lose it once again to new forms of political colonialism.' It made, said the paper, good political sense.

In fact, Aly's appointment had as much to do with internal Pakistani politics as with international considerations. The political group that controlled Pakistan at that time was a Shia group, centred around Feroze Khan Noon, then Prime Minister of Pakistan, with the real power exercised by Muzaffer Ali Qazalback, Chief Minister of West Pakistan. Qazalback, whose name in Turkish meant Red Cap, was related by marriage to Sikander Ali Baig (their wives were sisters). Baig was the son of the Aga's old friend, Sir Abbas Ali Baig, who had accompanied him to Egypt in 1915, and one of Pakistan's career diplomats. Qazalbach and Baig were also related to Aga III though they were not actually his followers. The appointment of Aly had been engineered by these two men.

Within weeks of Aly's maiden speech at the United Nations, however, the Shia group were themselves overthrown by Ayub Khan, Commander-in-Chief of Pakistan's armed forces, and a Sunni. Ayub's was the first of many military governments that have been a feature of Pakistan's political life, but this did not affect Aly all that much. The old Aga had been quite friendly with Ayub, and had often invited him down to Yakimour whenever Ayub was in Europe. He also seems to have urged Ayub to take over the government of Pakistan long before he actually did.

As Ayub Khan recalls in his memoirs, *Friends not Masters*, soon after the assassination of Liaquat Ali Khan in 1951 — the second great figure in the Pakistani movement after Jinnah — the Aga urged Ayub to overthrow the parliamentary system and save Pakistan: 'If the parliamentary system is the one you are going to follow, you will lose Pakistan. I have called you here to tell you that you will lose it this way, and that you are the one man who can save it.' Ayub seemed to have been well aware of the public relations' credentials of Aly as a Pakistani spokesman.

Aly's UN position meant that he spent more time in New York but in essence his life did not change. He remained the chaotic traveller, the chaotic lover. Bettina continued to watch with wonder and helpless fascination as Aly received the most amazing love letters and invitations from women, some of whom he had never known. His usual technique was to stuff these letters into his pockets, or keep them in the little bags that airline companies hand out to passengers. When he went on his travels he would pick up one of these bags and carry the letters with him, but they would almost invariably return unopened and add to the pile in his study. For many years one of the letter writers was a woman who wrote alternately in English and Italian, clearly, Bettina thought, in love with Aly but telling both Aly and Bettina terrible things about them. She had probably known Aly's mother and seemed to know every detail of Aly's life. Six months before Aly died the letters stopped, and two months after his death Bettina received one last little note: 'You got what was coming to you. You deserve everything that's happened to you.'

It is easy, in retrospect, to try and see a pattern and smooth the bumps of

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contemporary events into a nice historical line. In that year before Aly's death, friends would begin to notice that the playboy was ageing. He had always been restless, now he seemed to be fatalistic. One friend, noticing the rather tarty woman he had brought to a dinner party, thought that Aly at fifty was losing some of his old powers and was not quite capturing the sort of women he would have had a few years ago. To another friend, who had just had a prostatectomy, Aly confided that he would have to have the same operation soon. Every now and again he rubbed his abdomen and the friend warned him that the operation would affect his sexual activity.

The early charm of being Pakistan's representative to the United Nations had also begun to wither. In September 1959 the Algerian question was debated at the UN. Pakistan was then chairman of the emerging Third World block. Aly, acutely uncomfortable about having to say anything against French colonialism in Algeria, tried to moderate the anti-colonial sentiments of the Afro-Asian countries. This did him little good, for in France there was much criticism of his 'betrayal' of the country which he had virtually adopted. The only relief for this came when the Pakistan Government offered him the ambassadorship in Argentina, which he accepted.

Aly was still considering the attractions of the job when he arrived back in Paris in May 1960. Thursday, 12th May was by his standards to be an unexceptional day. He spent the afternoon at Longchamp racecourse and then returned to his Paris house to make arrangements for his trip to Argentina. There were itineraries and travel arrangements to be worked out, and eventually he decided to fly first to New York and then to Buenos Aires. He thought of the gift he would present to the President of Argentina and the protocol on such occasions. He was also looking forward to the Grand Prix dinner in Paris a month hence.

That evening he and Bettina had been invited to have dinner with Gerrard and Loraine Bonnet at their house, La Loge Repose in Ville-d'Avray, just outside Paris. It promised to be an interesting dinner: various Rothschilds, Porfirio Rubirosa who with Aly had been at the dinner party in Argentina at Christmas 1951 (when Gene Tierney had been impressed with neither), and the Greek ship owner, Stavros Niarchos. Aly was never a man to arrive anywhere on time, and it was well past nine before he, Bettina and Lucien, his chauffeur, got into his new Lancia. He had bought it four days before and wanted to drive it.

The journey seemed unremarkable. Aly chatted away with Bettina who was sitting next to him in the front, while Lucien watched the road and hoped his master would not turn on his daredevilry along the busy Paris night streets. They reached the French Resistance shrine at Mont Valerian on the outskirts of Paris safely enough and Aly had just taken the bend that would lead them into the Carrefour du Val d'Or when a yellow Simca with Belgian number plates swept round the corner. The two cars met head on. The driver of the Simca, Bettina and Lucien were slightly injured, but Aly's chest was crushed by the steering wheel. He suffered a fractured skull, a possible broken neck and fractured legs, and at some stage on the journey to hospital, Aly Khan died.

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Later, Loraine Bonnet would describe how she heard the news.

Aly was always late, so we weren't surprised when he had not arrived for dinner by ten o'clock. We were already seated at the table; the telephone rang. My maid said it was Bettina, and that she sounded very upset.

Bettina would never be able to recall the exact moments of the crash and would only be consoled when Karim arrived and looked so utterly lost. 'Karim's presence, and the feeling of emptiness he felt, did something to revive me. For his loneliness was mine, and this comforted me a little.'

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The Supreme Council of the Ismailis in Pakistan requested that Aly's body be flown to Pakistan for burial in Karachi. The family, having quickly gathered in Paris, decided to escort it by train to his Riviera Villa, the Château de l'Horizon, where in 1960 it was buried temporarily. Aly had always wanted to be buried among the Syrian Ismailis — who loved him and whose love he reciprocated — and a mausoleum was planned to be built at Salamieh. But though the mausoleum was built and Aly Khan was indeed reburied, it was not in Salamieh — and not for some years. On 11th July 1972, the body of Aly Khan was flown from Cannes to Damascus for reburial in special mausoleum built for the purpose there.

This burial made a small paragraph in the papers. Although it was only twelve years since Aly Khan had died, fifteen since Aga III had died, by 1972 they seemed to belong to long-gone history. It was as if the newspapers were reporting people who had been dead and buried for many centuries, or at least for many generations. In the year of Watergate and Nixon's visit to China and Russia, it was difficult to relate to the life and times of either the Aga or Aly. To some extent this was inevitable, but partly it was also the result of a deliberate act by Karim, Aga Khan IV.

He had begun his rule in a blaze of publicity about the young Harvard undergraduate who was one of the richest men in the world, revered as God by millions and the world's most eligible bachelor. For a time in the late fifties and sixties Karim had a status in the society press that was equivalent to that of Prince Charles in the mid-seventies and early eighties. Karim would later confess that the press always seemed to find him 'on the brink of matrimony'. Within months of Aga III's death the press turned up in force to watch Karim celebrate his twenty-first birthday by spending the night dancing at the London Savoy in the arms of a seventeen-year-old blonde, Sylvia Casablancas, the daughter of wealthy Mexican businessman Fernando Casablancas. Just a week later an English beauty, Patricia Rawlings, had replaced Sylvia and, in the view of the *Daily Mail*, was very likely to be the next Begum. By then Sylvia had confessed to reporters that the Aga was no more than a friend of her brother and any possibility of a true romance between them had been scotched by the fact that, soon after they met, they had both gone down with a cold. However Karim continued to see Sylvia and there were other women.

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The most prominent of them in those early years of his Aga Khanship was Baroness Anouschka van Mekhs, a young and beautiful daughter of a man variously described as a 'Baltic baron' and a White Russian. The two met at a ball in St Tropez in 1959 and over the years their comings and goings would feature regularly in the society press. In May 1962 the *News of the World* even reported that Yvette had told friends that the Aga was about to announce his engagement to Anouschka. The story was somewhat spoilt by the fact that the journalist in question had made out that Yvette was the mother of Karim, and it looked more like a story from Yvette seeking to establish that she was still the power behind the throne. Yvette, according to the *News of the World*, had been telling friends that Karim's marriage would remove a great burden from her shoulders because then she could satisfy her husband's will and 'retire'. Within a few weeks, the *Evening News* announced that the Aga was to hold a big party on the Riviera to celebrate the fifth anniversary of his accession to the title, a party that would include his girlfriend Anouschka, and then promptly apologized for suggesting such a thing — since the anniversary of the accession fell in the middle of Mohurrum, the Muslim month of fasting and abstinence.

But by the summer of 1963 there was a break with Anouschka and later in the year other women began to be talked about. Among them was the wife of Patrick Guinness, Karim's half-brother. Patrick was the son of Joan Aly Khan from her first marriage who died when his sports car crashed into a tree in the Swiss Rhône Valley in October 1063. His twenty-nine year old widow, Dolores Guinness, turned to Karim, as the newspapers put it, 'for comfort', and by the summer of 1964 friends were reporting that this was not one of Karim's light sentimental friendships. They had known each other for over twelve years and he wanted to marry Mrs Guinness. But, as with all such stories, these friends were not quite accurate, or perhaps not accurately reported, and within a year there was a new mystery woman to delight the gossip columnists.

The *Sunday Express*, that fearless investigator of such doings, reported that the Aga had temporarily gone underground, and there was a strong reason to believe that he was preparing for a marriage to Princess Shahnaz, the twenty-four year old daughter of the Shah of Persia. A few months before, Shahnaz had been divorced from Ardeshir Zahedi, the Persian Ambassador in London, and Karim and Shahnaz had been seen together often in Switzerland where both of them had homes. In 1959, Shahnaz's father had granted the Aga the title of His Royal Highness. The two men had often skied together and just before the 1964 Winter Olympics there was some talk of the Aga skiing for Iran. As we have seen, Karim's grandfather had established the principle that the Aga Khans were Iranian citizens and, though the Aga could have easily walked into the Iranian skiing team for the Olympics, he preferred to represent Britain at the games. Although he trained hard, he was not chosen for the British team and eventually competed at Innsbruck under Iranian colours.

All this may or may not have affected any possibility of a romance with Shahnaz but, in any case, a marriage between the two would have been

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fraught with all sorts of Muslim theological problems. Their interpretation of the particular sect varied widely. Shahnaz was part of the mainstream Shia tradition of Persia, 'Twelvers', and as Aga III had moaned to Harcourt Butler, Shahnaz's followers had often persecuted Ismaili Khojas. About this time, the Aga also began to distance himself, imperceptibly, from his grandfather and his way of running the community. Although in public he continued to lavish praise on his grandfather, his sagacity, his wisdom and the remarkable manner in which he had tutored his grandson by asking him searching questions — and still continues to praise him — he had by the summer of 1964 completed his tuition. By then the seven-year guardianship of Yvette, imposed by the Aga's will, was over. He realized that important changes had to be made if his Ismaili community was to go forward. For all the progress the community was said to have made under Aga III, it was still a backward, fear-ridden community which had to be brought into modern times. The much heralded Diamond Jubilee Investment Trust set up by his grandfather had done little good, and probably some economic damage to the community and, advised by Dr Peter Hengl, a young German graduate of the Maxwell School of Economics and Political Science at the University of Syracuse in the United States, the Aga undertook to modernize his community.

It was done through the setting up of the Industrial Promotion Services which provided loans, and financial expertise, to the Ismailis to broaden their business and develop their industry. The Aga also recognized that the community could no longer be run in the autocratic absolute fashion that his grandfather had done. His grandfather could allow George Criticos at the Ritz to collect brown paper parcels stuffed with money from his followers, but Karim realized that such a system could not endure for long. On his very first trip to India and Pakistan, as he was installed as the new Imam, he had sensed the gulf between his world and the world of his followers. Many of them knew little about Karim and in that part of the world Aly Khan was still a great hero, and when Karim visited some of the Jamat Khanas of India and Pakistan, his followers were busy scouring round for photographs of the young Imam, so little known was he. In the years between 1957 and 1964 this had been rectified and now further changes had to be made. Karim was free of Yvette and her insistence that she was the power behind the throne. Even on his first trip to the subcontinent and other parts of his Islamic community, Karim had deferred to his mother's more cosmopolitan judgement that he should acquire PR people to promote his image. Joan Aly Khan, on the advice of her friend Denis Hamilton, who was to become Editor-in-Chief of *The Times* and *The Sunday Times*, acquired for her son the services of Michael Curtis, a former editor of the *News Chronicle*. He had acted as PR for young Karim on his first trip as Imam, in October 1957. Over the years Curtis was to build up an efficient PR team both to shield Karim and promote his image.

Karim had also acquired a place that he could call his own: the Sardinian resort of Porto Cervo. He had discovered it when he was yachting — a wild, inhospitable and uninhabitable shoreline which he quickly bought

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from a Sardinian in a transaction that would later be described as not dissimilar to that in which the Indians sold Manhattan to the Whites. Soon the Aga had attracted his jet set friends to this Aga State, including Princess Margaret whom he once rescued from a boat crash. This phase of the Aga's life was neatly rounded up; in 1969 he married Sally Croker Poole, an English socialite who had once modelled coats under the slogan 'to catch a sheik'. (See illustration, page 239.) His marriage was to be marked by a splash of publicity about the Aga, his role as an Ismaili leader, and the romanticism of a marriage between a half-English spiritual God and a very English lady. The marriage itself was a lavish occasion, with pearls thrown at the couple's feet. Gifts ranging from silver oysters filled with rare pearls to solid gold boxes, Oriental carpets, inlaid furniture, jewels and 100 pounds of Iranian caviar sent by the Shah. The marriage guest list read like an international *Who's Who*: Princess Margaret, Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands, Princess Ashraf of Iran, and Prince Victor Emmanuel.

The occasion was also marked by a rash of interviews by the Aga which sought to promote the serious side of his life and activities. Even then, interviewers seemed to notice that the Aga, though still only thirty-two, seemed to be ageing. Nicholas Tomalin interviewed him for *The Sunday Times* and noticed that he took a deep breath when answering questions. Is this asthma, he wondered? No, replied Karim, 'it is the result of pressure. I enjoy being under pressure. I have been under pressure since I was seventeen. But sometimes the strain is much greater than people realize.' Nicholas Tomalin got the impression that the Aga sounded much older than his age would indicate; perhaps it was the pressures of publicity that made it seem so, but a year later these pressures were to increase.

In 1970, a year after the marriage, Willi Frischauer published his book on the Aga Khans. Karim had cooperated with Frischauer. Years later an aide close to Karim would say that they had learned their lessons from the Frischauer book. Whatever it was, the book marked the withdrawal of Karim from public life. Marriage had eliminated the tag of the most eligible bachelor in the world and he seemed happy to withdraw to Sardinia and build the sort of Aga-State for which his grandfather had hungered.

In the years since then Karim has courted publicity in a role that combines something of the lifestyles of his grandfather and father. He could not have matched his grandfather's record-breaking Derby victories, or be quite as flamboyant as Aly on the racecourse. But he had his successes, particularly with that wonderful horse Shergar despite its recent tragic kidnapping. It is true that Karim has not been called away from a League of Nations meeting to lead a Derby winner in, but there can be no doubting the mark he has made on racing. And, unlike his grandfather, Karim has not tried to present racing as something that the Gods indulged in, that the spiritual leader of a Muslim sect had a special dispensation to lead in Derby winners.

Just as Karim had realized that the changing political winds would lead to a very different kind of Ismaili community around the world, so he realized that if he wanted to lead the life of luxury and wealth he had inherited from his followers, he would have to adapt to modern styles. This involved an

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efficient public relations team — building on the foundations laid by Michael Curtis — to provide him with the right contacts in the world's press and media and shield his life from investigators or gossip writers. In the years since his marriage, the Aga had in fact done just that. He built up his Sardinian resort, he developed his palatial homes in Paris, Geneva, Cap d'Antibes and Chantilly, and led the quintessential jet-setting life — spending his winters in St Moritz, his summers in Sardinia and attending every chic European meeting or ball given by a Rothschild or Baron Alexis de Rede. He was unhappy if journalists pried at all into his private life, or into his relationship with his followers. As far as the latter was concerned, his advice to them had always been — and has always been — that they should owe loyalty to the state in which they live. And he has always been sensitive to any charge of interference in the running of the states in which his followers live.

In recent years his life seems to have changed once again. In 1976, after much high-level debate about taxation and similar issues, Karim moved his Imamate's headquarters from Switzerland to France, building two replica seventeenth-century châteaux on a large wooded estate at Gouviux, near the Chantilly racing stables — one as his central office and the other as a home for himself, his wife and their three children. Taxation undoubtedly played a part in the Aga's move, but another reason may have been that in France there are certain special laws to protect public men. French law allows any public figure to sue, and collect damages, if what is written about him or her in any newspaper or magazine distributed in France has no bearing on their public life. The truth of the story is no defence for the journalist and this automatically broadens the libel protection provided to a public figure. But in the last few years the Aga himself seems to have decided that he needs to promote his image. This was partly to mark his twenty-five years as Imam of the Ismailis, and partly because the turn of political events made a moderate Muslim leader once again useful.

Just as the Raj's needs in India in 1906 — and Turkey's collapse in the early years of this century — made Aga III a Muslim leader, the promotion of Karim as the moderate Muslim has come as the Western world has struggled to cope with the rise of Islam's fundamentalism under Ayatollah Khomeni. When Aga III died and Karim took over it seemed inconceivable that theocratic Islam could ever pose a threat to the West. Such challenges, in the wake of Suez, looked more likely to come from nationalism, particularly the Arab type imposed by Gamal Abdul Nasser. Now with the wheel turned full circle, many Western countries, and even some Eastern ones, find it comforting to deal with a leader whose followers prefer money to war. Karim's particular skill lies in the fact that despite being a Westerner — racially, spiritually and intellectually — he projects the right image of a moderate willing to work with the extremes of all kinds.

In a time of change and conflicts, revolution and bloodshed in the Third World, Karim has undoubtedly displayed political skill in projecting an image that has made him a friend of both Mrs Gandhi and President Zia of Pakistan. (See illustration, page 240.)

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He has been helped in this by the fact that he himself does not live in a Muslim country and, as he confesses, he is not adversely affected by changes in those countries. He has also done this by projecting a modern Muslim image, providing rewards for architecture that reflect Muslim design, and by stressing his conviction to religion and the need for prayer and guidance. Karim has also chosen to portray himself as a serious, at times boring man. Whereas his grandfather had revelled in ostentatious displays, and his father was flamboyant, Karim's public statements seem laced with the sort of comments that even his admirers have called jargon phrases, like 'national objectives', 'cost effectiveness', 'feasibility studies' and 'downstream investment'.

Hella Pick, reporting this in a rare interview for the *Guardian* on 24th February 1980, also observed that the Aga was keen to project his image as a 'pace setter and grand strategist' for his community. The interview, in a bland, approving presentation of the Aga as 'the Ismailis' rich champion', was to have a strange sequel. Hella Pick is largely noted for her expertise on Communist affairs; she is Jewish, and the Aga was to commission her as his biographer. His intention was to have a biography issued to coincide with his twenty-fifth anniversary celebrations in 1982. Unfortunately the book does not appear to have enlarged on the approving image as portrayed in the *Guardian* interview and, after two years, the manuscript has still not been published.

In that sense he could be acting like any other rich man. He is, of course, no ordinary rich man. He is His Highness, although the grant of this title by the Queen to him in 1957 was just as symbolic as the grant made to his grandfather. He is also worshipped as God by his followers. In Western eyes he has the further qualification that not only is he a moderate Muslim but officially, and to all other purposes, he is as near Western as makes no difference.

But what of his legacy? The Aga in his interviews, and public statements, has always venerated his grandfather and, in a different way, his father. To Aly, Karim undoubtedly owes his immediate Western connections which have smoothed his path and provided him with very high-level contacts, particularly in English society. The legacy of Aga Khan III is much more dubious.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Aga III was one of those to whom the epithet 'great' is easily applied. Not because of what he did, but because he lived in a rich, complex style, and tracing his life is like tracing a history of the world over the last 100 years. He was a young man when Victoria was Queen, America was young, Russia under the safe control of the Tsars, China in the grip of opium wars, and Africa was still being scrambled for. By the time he died in 1957, though the revolutions of the Third World were yet to come, the world had changed drastically. The Tsar had gone, America was reaching out to the mid-phases of its own imperial age, Russia and China had become Communist but were ganging up against each other in the great Communist split, and the non-

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aligned Third World, under Jaharwalal Nehru, was just developing. To have known some of the principal players over such a contrasting span of time would have been remarkable indeed. The Aga in his *Memoirs*, and hagiographers since then, have claimed a bigger role for him; that he himself was a principal player in much that happened during these tumultuous times. As we have seen, such claims can hardly be justified.

Aga Khan III was involved in a great many enterprises over his long life. But what they amounted to in total is difficult to say. Neither conviction nor loyalty were conspicuous traits of Aga III. In the 1890s it did not take much to realize that Britain was the most important power in the world and an alliance with her would benefit him. The decision to ally with Britain had, in any case, already been made by his grandfather, Aga I; the intricacies of the politics of the Raj and the complexities of the Hindu-Muslim problems, made the Aga's choice inevitable. It is interesting to speculate what might have happened if the Aga had led the Muslims down the nationalist path as chosen by his contemporary Gokhale. That could very well have changed the face of the subcontinent.

What is contradictory is not that the Aga chose the British, but that in modern Pakistan he should be seen as one of the founders of the state. Although from 1906 the Aga was a champion of a separate entity, as late as 1946 he did not actually foresee the British leaving India. His argument for a separate Muslim entity was based not on the hope that one day a separate Muslim state would be carved out of the Indian subcontinent, but that this would help preserve British rule in India and project his own image as leader of the Indian Muslims. The fact that he should now be regarded as one of the founders of Pakistan merely exposes the quality of the pre-Jinnah Muslim leadership in India. The creation of Pakistan owes almost everything to Mohammed Ali Jinnah, a man for whom the Aga did little, and whom he consistently opposed — almost until the end.

Where the Aga deserves credit — and some political wonder — is that for thirty years, from 1906 to 1936, he projected himself as the leader of the Indian Muslims in various ways. This was a quite remarkable, perhaps unparalleled, political achievement. The great majority of the Indian Muslims were Sunnis; the Aga was a Shia and the leader of a small heretical Shia sect mistrusted by most of the other Indian Muslims. Moreover, the Aga spent most of those thirty years in England and Europe, thousands of miles away from India at a time of poor communications. But this does not seem to have affected his standing as leader; and in many ways the Aga's political leadership was a conjuring trick. Patrick had shrewdly noted, in the debate over the Aga's state, that the Aga's leadership rested on a double illusion. Indian Muslims thought that he was the one leader who had instant and ready rapport with English politicians in London, and the politicians in London felt comfortable dealing with the Aga who was the sort of Westernized politician whom the English in public affairs were constantly seeking. In a modern, more sceptical age, such a double illusion would have been very quickly shattered. The press would hardly have taken the Aga so consistently at his own valuation and the public would have questioned

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some of the contradictions of his position. But it was a more credulous, more secretive age. The Aga had been careful to ensure that his really bizarre ideas remained hidden in secret files, far from the prying eyes of the press and the public.

The Aga was able to project his image as a world leader because the spread of his followers did allow him to claim, with some justice, that he had a worldwide community, even if he greatly exaggerated both the number of his followers and their influence in the countries of which they were nationals. This cosmopolitanism, however limited, enabled the Aga to break free from the feudal constraints that had inhibited his grandfather, Aga I, and remained a feature of the many Nawabs and Maharajas who were contemporaries of Aga III. Whereas they, secure in their own territories, saw little or no reason to change, the Aga, perpetually seeking a place he could call his own, did appreciate the need for building an alternative to his lost homeland of Kerman. He may have used his reputation for being important to become even more important, and his reputation for being influential to garner even more influence — a sort of virtuous circle that a modern politician would envy — and in the process he did secure for himself a position and a headquarters in the West that has now become quite crucial to his successor and to his followers. The Aga's reason for doing so may not have been vindicated by time and history. He did so because he believed that the British Empire would last for ever and he sought to place himself and as much of the Muslim world as he could influence in the British sphere of influence. However faulty that political thinking, and the failure to appreciate the whims, nationalism and change blowing through the world, the result of the action was that the Aga Khan family, hounded out of Persia in the 1840s, found itself in the 1950s in a secure position in the West. Had Aga Khan III followed his father and grandfather's footsteps and lived in Bombay, the position of his community would probably have been a bit like that of the Dawoodi Bohras, the other Ismaili sect in India, which, at the time of writing, is riddled with dissension. Few in the West know of the community, and its leader has little or no influence outside his own followers on the subcontinent.

It is this legacy of influence and importance, all the more valuable because it never needs to be tested, that is Aga III's greatest legacy to his grandson. Even members of the community now recognize that Aga III was a conservative, reactionary leader who did little or nothing for the community. In contrast, Karim has been a forward-looking leader who has modernized the community, using sophisticated technology, including computers, to project the image of a modern Muslim willing to come to terms with a modern world. Even those Ismailis who have little or no faith in Karim, or their community, have no personal animosity against the present Aga Khan. They may find their community's infatuation with money and the search for it disturbing, but they often praise Aga IV for his keeness to help the community to educate and improve itself. But Karim could not have come to this present position if his grandfather had not left him the legacy that he did.

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Although Aga III's political life was hopelessly confused and muddled, lacking principles and ideas and shifting with every change of political fortune, his decision to base himself in the West was, in many ways, the greatest boon he could have granted his followers. In that sense Aga III was the first Asian immigrant who, by migrating to Europe, transformed his life. Had he not done so, it is difficult to see how Karim could now project himself as a moderate Muslim leader, with wealth in the West, power in the East and with political friends in both East and West willing to listen to him. But as Ismailis now say, perhaps Aga III's best legacy was the fact that he chose Karim, not his son Aly or even Sadruddin, to succeed him. Skipping a generation may have been controversial in the fifties, today it seems rather far-sighted.

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Biographies, like human beings, are made of many parts. This must seem the most banal of clichés, but for a writer chronicling a family history of several generations, it means hard work and much research in various obscure places. I have provided as comprehensive a list as possible — without making it too long or boring — but some sources need to be highlighted. The Collections at the India Office Library — both public and private — and at the Public Record Office proved invaluable, as also the Maharastra State Archives in Bombay, despite the labyrinthine bureaucratic trap it lays for the researcher.

The story of Aga I, told in Book I, is principally derived from FO 60, The Persia Series, and Lord Ellenborough's papers at the Public Record Office, the journals and political diaries of Henry Rawlinson at the Royal Geographic Society and the various records at the India Office. Until 1858, India was ruled not by the British Crown, but by the East India Company over which the Crown kept control through the Board of Commissioners for the Affairs of India, generally known as the India Board or the Board of Control. From 1858, India was directly ruled by the Crown, the East India Company was abolished and the Board of Control replaced by the India Office. Given the nature of Aga I's story, this has meant looking at letters between the Raj headquarters in Calcutta and various parts of India, generally Bombay and other Western Provinces; letters to and from India and the Persian Gulf — the latter being known as Factory Records — and drafts of Board Minutes and letters in London.

The archival sources for Aga III, reflecting his life, cover a much wider canvas and, literally, all four continents, but here again the collections in the India Office Library and the Public Records Office have proved most invaluable. Less useful, though vastly instructive, have been contemporary newspaper accounts, particularly *The Times*, whose reporting of India in the first part of this century must be one of the most dismal records in the history of journalism. Least helpful, at times positively misleading, have been the various books published on this subject. Aga I, thankfully, did not leave behind any memoirs of his own. Aga III did, but to read it is to appreciate Aneurin Bevan's comment when asked whether he read biographies of statesmen: 'No,' he replied, 'I prefer my fiction straight.' In Aga III's case, he seemed to have produced not only memoirs that are as near to fiction as makes no difference, but they are boring as well. The various biographers who have tried to capture Aga III and the other Khans, have not done very much better. One of Aga III's first biographers, Nauroji Dumasia, managed to secure access to India Office records — in 1938, long before they were open to the public — and used them with such partiality that the resulting book should be a lesson to anybody attempting history or a well-researched biography. The writers who have followed — invariably European — have not even found it necessary to do even the limited, extremely partial research that Dumasia undertook, preferring a

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scissors and paste job: setting out various bits from printed sources and sticking them together with the glue of the unattributed anecdote. Even Willi Frischauer's much vaunted triple biography of Aga Khans I, III and IV, repeats many of the previous distortions and makes few concessions to authenticated, credible history. Although it was written in 1970, much of the archival material was then available.

Perhaps the Aga Khans' story is so legendary that it is difficult to resist myths. What is more depressing is that even general histories of this period rarely live up to their name, particularly Muslim history. Biographical tradition has never been strong on the Indian subcontinent but while it is developing, Muslim historians and biographers seem to have a long way to travel. This is supremely ironic. Indian historical writing began with Albeurini and the arrival of Islam in the eleventh century; before that for almost 4,000 years, Hindus had produced no Western-style historical chronology of dates, places and narrative, except one — Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*. The descendants of Albeurini have not kept pace with time and many of the so-called historical texts on Muslim/Indian politics that I referred to were less than useless. This made the book all the more reliant on primary archival sources, which is just as well.

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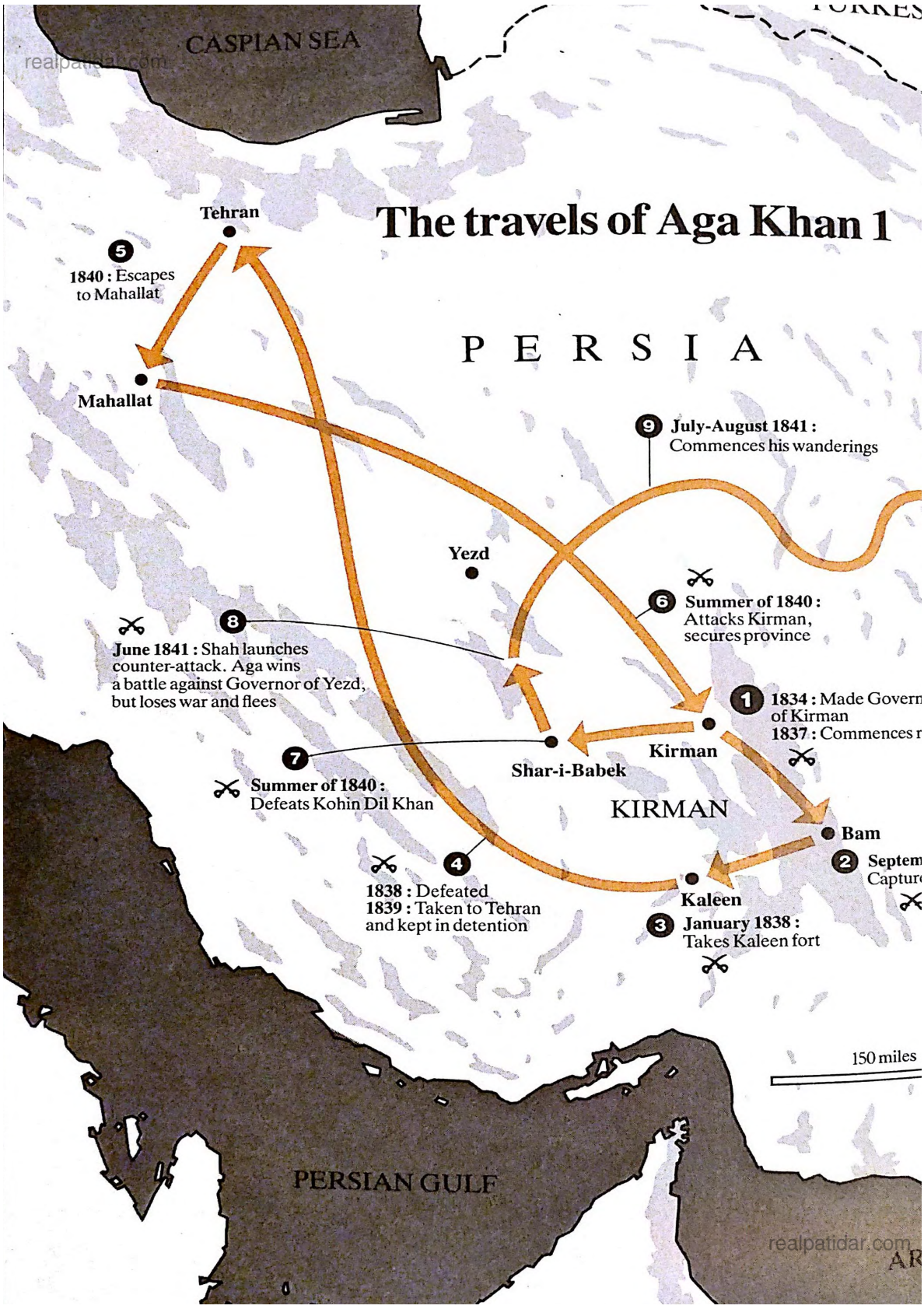
CASPIAN SEA
The travels of Aga Khan 1
Tehran
5 1840 : Escapes to Mahallat
PERSIA
Mahallat
9 July-August 1841 : Commences his wanderings
Yezd
6 Summer of 1840 : Attacks Kirman, secures province
8 June 1841 : Shah launches counter-attack. Aga wins a battle against Governor of Yezd, but loses war and flees
1 1834 : Made Governor of Kirman
1837 : Commences r
Kirman
7 Summer of 1840 : Defeats Kohin Dil Khan
Shar-i-Babek
KIRMAN
Bam
2 Septem
Captur
4 1838 : Defeated
1839 : Taken to Tehran and kept in detention
Kaleen
3 January 1838 : Takes Kaleen fort
150 miles
PERSIAN GULF

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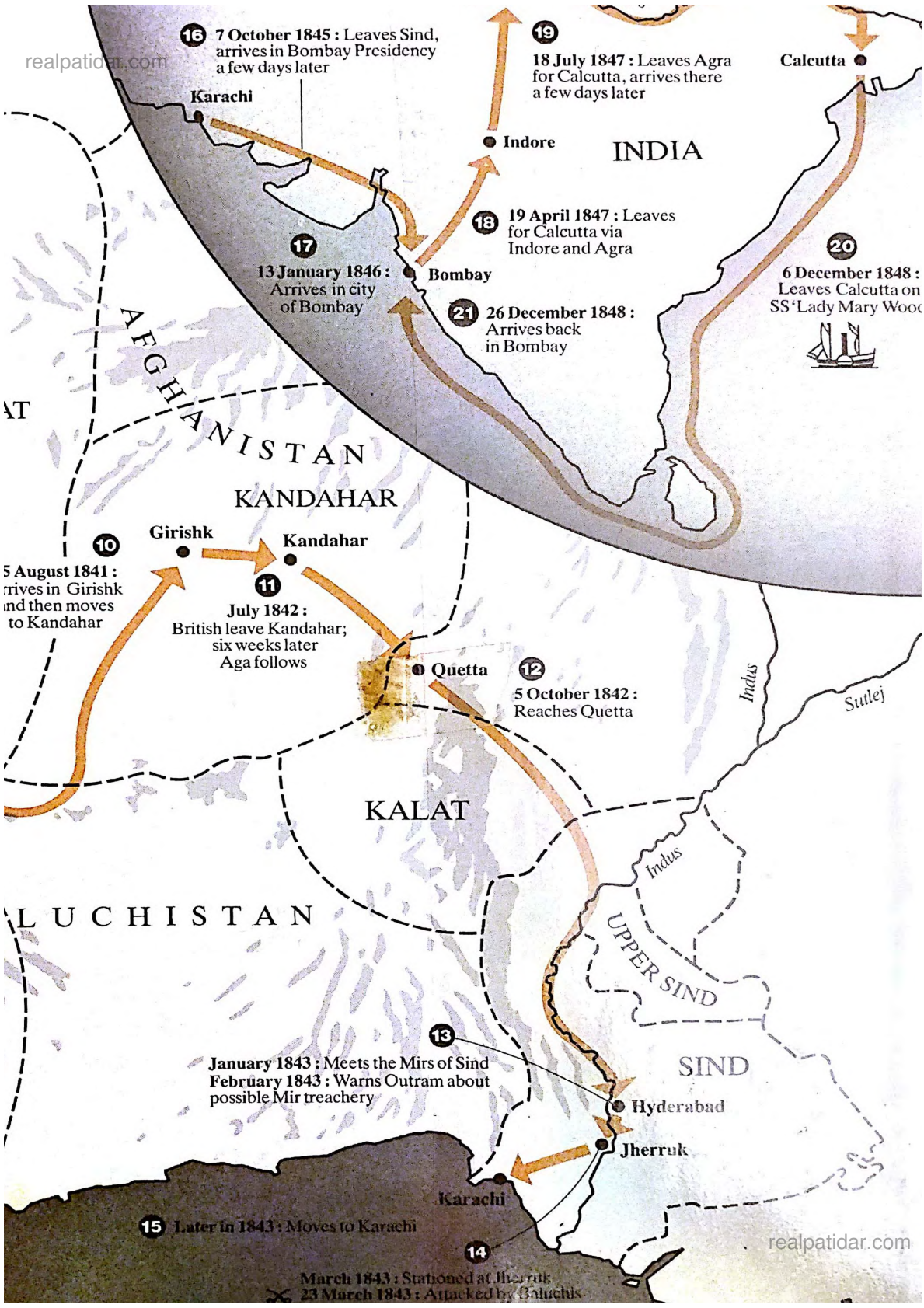
16 7 October 1845 : Leaves Sind, arrives in Bombay Presidency a few days later
Karachi
19 18 July 1847 : Leaves Agra for Calcutta, arrives there a few days later
Calcutta
Indore
INDIA
18 19 April 1847 : Leaves for Calcutta via Indore and Agra
17 13 January 1846 : Arrives in city of Bombay
Bombay
20 6 December 1848 : Leaves Calcutta on SS 'Lady Mary Wood
21 26 December 1848 : Arrives back in Bombay
AFGHANISTAN
KANDAHAR
Girishk
Kandahar
10 5 August 1841 : Arrives in Girishk and then moves to Kandahar
11 July 1842 : British leave Kandahar; six weeks later Aga follows
Quetta
12 5 October 1842 : Reaches Quetta
Indus
Sutlej
KALAT
Indus
UPPER SIND
SIND
13 January 1843 : Meets the Mirs of Sind
February 1843 : Warns Outram about possible Mir treachery
Hyderabad
Jherruk
Karachi
15 Later in 1843 : Moves to Karachi
14 March 1843 : Stationed at Jherruk
23 March 1843 : Attacked by Baluchis
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